

THE POLITICS OF
EXPANSION
THE CHOLA CONQUEST OF
SRI LANKA AND SRI VIJAYA

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Preface

In 1967, I completed a Ph. D. dissertation in history at the University of California, Berkeley. It was entitled "Royal Leadership and Imperial Conquest in Medieval South India : The Naval Expedition of Rajendra Chola I, c. 1025 A.D." and it dealt with the circumstances leading up to the Chōla raid against the South-east Asian maritime state of Śrīvijaya. In the years following the completion of that study, I published numerous articles on various aspects of south Indian history in scholarly journals but made no attempt to turn the dissertation into a book. Still, as other scholars working on the Chōla period have published their own research, my thesis has been referred to in several studies in gratifyingly flattering terms, so the fact that it has not been available except through the facilities of University Microfilms has become increasingly awkward. I have therefore availed myself of the very kind invitation from New Era Publications to transform the thesis into a book.

The invitation provides me with an opportunity to address once again, with the aid of several years of additional research on the Chōla period by myself and others, the central issues that I considered in the original study, questions regarding the structure of the state, the characteristics of royal leadership, and the significance of inscriptional conquest rhetoric. A discussion of Chōla conquests beyond the shores of India serves as a convenient organizing principle for a study seeking to address simultaneously all of these related issues. The original study, like the present book, was not so much an analysis of military campaigns as an attempt to illuminate some basic features of the Chōla state during

the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, so that the many conquests which loom so large in the conventional narratives of south Indian history can be seen, not as random episodes, but as necessary consequences of certain ideological features of south Indian kingship and of distinctive structural characteristics of states that flourished during the centuries prior to the rise of the Vijayanagar empire.

It would have been inappropriate to publish the original thesis unrevised. Too much additional scholarship has appeared during the last decade and a half to allow all of my original arguments to stand unmodified, and my perspective has changed somewhat over the years in response to the work of other scholars and to further investigations of my own. Particularly important book-length studies that have appeared since 1967 include Y. Subbarayalu's *Political Geography of the Chola Country* (Madras, 1973), Kenneth R. Hall's *Trade and Statecraft in the Age of the Cōlas* (New Delhi, 1980), and above all, Burton Stein's *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* (Delhi, 1980). The value of these contributions to my own work goes beyond any token acknowledgement.

While I have attempted to take account of these and other recent additions to the scholarly literature, I have also considered it unwise to revise my manuscript so drastically that it would bear little resemblance to the original study; that would have defeated the purpose of publishing the thesis. The present volume therefore retains the general structure and central argument of the original study, but bears a new title that gives equal emphasis to Sri Lanka, revised chapter headings, and extensively revised contents. Chapter four appeared in 1976, in slightly different form, as an article in the *Journal of Asian Studies*, under the title "The Politics of Plunder: The Cholas in Eleventh-Century Ceylon." Chapters five and six, on Southeast Asia, have been substantially rewritten to accommodate recent historical—and more particularly, archaeological—research. Recent publications have raised some grave doubts regarding the accuracy of conventional theories about Indianization and particularly about the structure of the maritime state of Śrīvijaya, if indeed there was such a state. Several illustrative figures, mostly maps, have been prepared for this book. None appeared in the 1967 thesis. I have also included a revised bibliography, with particular emphasis on relevant scholarly

literature in American and European journals to which Indian readers might not have easy access. All entries were consulted, although not all are cited in the footnotes. In the text, I have tried to eliminate highly technical details, especially of the kind that are primarily of interest to epigraphists, in order to make the book accessible to a general readership and to place the emphasis on narrative and theory. Chinese words are transliterated according to the Wade-Giles system, rather than the currently fashionable Pinyin system. No attempt has been made to employ British/Indian spellings of words like "center" or "color." As a child of my culture, I have employed Americanized spellings throughout, except in direct quotations.

The relevant intellectual debts that I have incurred over the years are too numerous to mention, but special thanks should be given to those with whom I have had a close working relationship, including my history mentors at the University of California, namely Eugene Irschick and Thomas Metcalf, and my Tamil instructor, N. Kumaraswami Raja, now on the faculty of Annamalai University; Burton Stein of the University of Hawaii, the leading American interpreter of the Chōla period; Robert Frykenberg of the University of Wisconsin, for his kindness and encouragement; Kenneth Hall of Tufts University, a former student of mine who has now established his own reputation as an interpreter of South and Southeast Asian history; and the late K. A. Nilakanta Sastri of the University of Madras, to whose impressive synthesis of Chōla history other scholars will forever be indebted and whose kind and generous help to me in Madras during the mid-1960s is hereby acknowledged with gratitude. While my interpretations frequently differ from those of the scholars just mentioned, their contributions, along with those of other writers too numerous to list here, have been invaluable to my own work.

I am also grateful to the library and archival facilities, including generous assistance by staff members, at the universities of California, Wisconsin, London, and Madras, and of course Northern Illinois University, as well as at the Office of the Chief Epigraphist at Ootacamund, now located in Mysore. Last but not least, my colleagues in the Department of History at Northern Illinois University have been a source of encouragement and useful

ideas. Those colleagues include my wife, Elaine, whose own research in German history occasionally has been inconvenienced by my investigations in more exotic realms, but whose knowledge, patience, and understanding have been highly supportive. Financial assistance was provided by two successive Foreign Area Fellowships from 1965 to 1967. They made possible my field work in England and India as well as a period of writing in California. Subsequent financial assistance for work on related aspects of Choja has been provided by Northern Illinois University and the American Philosophical Society.

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Introduction

This book seeks to explain Chōla overseas expansion into Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia during the tenth and eleventh centuries, and to do so in a way that sheds light on the Chōla state itself. By investigating a roughly century-long cycle of military expansion and contraction whose climax, around 1025 A.D., was Rājendra Chōla's attack on Śrīvijaya (as the Tamil incursion into the Malay peninsula and Sumatra is conventionally but perhaps misleadingly described), we can focus on a specific development within a limited period of time and thereby consider that theme in a wider institutional context than is customary in the familiar dynastic histories. The advantage of this approach is that in the standard histories of south Indian states—and K. A. Nilakanta Sastri's authoritative work *The Cōlas* is no exception—events are typically compartmentalized into discrete, topical categories, with politico-military narrative receiving primary attention and economic, religious and other subjects being accorded subsidiary treatment. This conventional separation of topics obscures important connections, as for example between peasant economy and local support for *brahmadēya* communities (a connection between economics and religion), or between cross-cousin marriage in Dravidian kinship and Chōla political alliances (society and politics). Such connections should be explored rather than obscured, and fresh approaches to the analysis of south Indian history need to be encouraged in order to clarify such relationships. The present study is only a modest example of what might be done.

The events which constitute the main subjects of this study

were chosen not only for their explanatory value, but also for their special interest. As in China, so too in India the great conquerors has usually confined their activities to the land. Indian maritime endeavors, by contrast, have usually been characterized by trade and the peaceful spread of Indian culture into Southeast Asia. But under the rule of the most ambitious and innovative of the imperial Chōla kings, Rājarāja I and his son Rājendra I, the Chōlas began to look beyond the shores of India proper—first, to Sri Lanka during Rājarāja's reign, then at least as far as the Malay peninsula, under Rājendra. There is reason to be skeptical about some Chōla claims of conquest, but there can be no doubt whatever of a gradually increasing Chōla awareness of distant lands and an interest in claiming their subjugation. And there was a prolonged Chōla presence in Sri Lanka, such that at least in the northernmost part of the island, there is evidence of well-established Tamil settlements acknowledging Chōla hegemony.

There are some crucial differences between the Chōla presence in Sri Lanka and in Southeast Asia, however. One relates to the duration of direct Chōla involvement. Chōla incursions into Sri Lanka acted as a "conditioning" experience in that they accustomed Tamil warriors to follow the routes of maritime commerce to prizes beyond India's shores. But Chōla involvement in Sri Lanka lasted for the better part of a century and, as has recently been discovered by scholars from the University of Sri Lanka, a Chōla viceroy was even appointed, at least briefly, to govern a portion of it. The Chōla attack on scattered settlements in Southeast Asia, on the other hand, was only a brief raid—or at least it is usually so characterized by historians, and there seems to be no reason to reject that view. Another and related difference is that important Chōla inscriptions have been found in Sri Lanka, some of them discovered quite recently, and scholars like K. Indrapala and S. Gunasingam have shown admirable zeal in locating them. But no records of the Chōlas have yet been found in the parts of Southeast Asia that Rājendra claims to have conquered. The so-called Śrīvijaya expedition is known only from the formal and stylized description of it in Rājendra's eulogy. The relevant record is not found in Southeast Asia, but is inscribed on the west wall of the Central shrine in the great Chōla temple at Tanjāvūr (Tanjore)—I shall follow the

rather odd convention of referring to it as "the Tanjore inscription," even though it is but one of many important records there—and its list of the places Rājendra claimed to have conquered is so ambiguously described that when it was first published in *South Indian Inscriptions* in 1891, the editor, E. Hultzsch, assumed that the names represented localities in India.¹ The difference is therefore not merely one of distance from southern India, but also in the quality of documentation and hence of credibility.

It might be appropriate to indicate where our discussion will take us. This book begins with a brief examination of the background to Chōla overseas expansion—first, in terms of the structural characteristics of the Chōla political system in its period of early growth (chapter two); secondly, in relation to the reigns of Rājarāja and Rājendra, whose ambitions are most directly related to Chōla expansion overseas (chapter three). Those chapters have been kept short in order to emphasize interpretation and to avoid useless repetition of details available in other books. The analysis of Chōla expansion leads, in the fourth chapter, to an examination of the Chōla involvement in Sri Lanka and the political dilemmas which that occupation exemplified. The fifth chapter is devoted to a discussion of early Indian commercial and cultural contacts with Southeast Asia, considered as background to Rājendra's raid, with particular emphasis on recent archaeological discoveries and new theories. Chapter six consists of an examination of the maritime state of Śrīvijaya and especially a consideration of doubts which have arisen during the past decade regarding the customary scholarly interpretations of that state, for it is now apparent that conventional interpretations of Śrīvijaya are even more problematic than are those of the Chōla kingdom. Finally, the Southeast Asian adventure is discussed in relation to the themes developed in the previous chapters.

SOME THEORETICAL AND COMPARATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

While analyzing the eleventh-century military campaigns of King Anawratha of Pagan, Janice Stargardt recently observed that the Burmese and Mon chronicles, as well as the later inscriptions of Pegu, explain Anawratha's expeditions in religious terms—as quests for Buddhist relics, specifically the Tooth, Hair, and Sacred

Frontlet relics. Thus campaigns which were "clearly military in character, and probably economic in purpose" were recorded in the chronicles as missions of Buddhist piety. But as Stargardt's discussion also makes clear, these alleged motives were not just the imaginative musings of chroniclers, for in Anawratha's day threats of war were actually expressed as demands for relics. Refusal was interpreted as defiance and constituted grounds for attack; compliance constituted political submission. Furthermore, a military campaign whose purposes and benefits might otherwise have been "obscure" to the general populace could be justified when the relics and sacred treasures of a conquered land were brought home in triumph.²

Stargardt's observation about eleventh-century Burma is cited here because it illustrates an important point, and also a problem, about the interpretation of epigraphic and chronicle accounts of political behavior. Such records often are not what they seem; they may say one thing, but signify something else. Stated motives may not be the real ones. Or rather, they constitute idealized, and therefore incomplete, versions of events. The sources not only have to be studied, but also interpreted, even *decoded*, because statements about kings and other heroes are couched in a language at once poetic and metaphoric, resonant with multiple meanings and especially religious implications—as, for example, to cite two rather elementary but relevant Chōla instances, when the invasion of Sri Lanka by Rājaraṇa I is likened to the exploits of the epic hero Rāma, or when the expedition of Rājaraṇa's son Rājendra I into north India is described as a quest for the sacred river Ganges and the epithet Conqueror-of-the-Ganges is thereafter employed both as a personal epithet for the king and as the name of a new capital.

We must make allowances for the ideological context in which these achievements were celebrated; and we must also consider the eulogists' values as primary data for our analysis. These propaganda devices were among the very instruments of kingship which it is the historian's task to understand. Among the questions which we must ask of the sources is this one: What purposes and material interests were really served by the activities described in these idealized accounts?

Scholars certainly have not neglected warfare in south Indian history, since war and politics tend to be viewed as synonymous. Indeed, conventional histories read like a catalogue of campaigns and alleged conquests. But whether these activities have been properly understood is more doubtful. Military expansion is usually treated as self-justifying, since its presumed purpose is territorial conquest and expansion of the frontiers of empire. Most historians who have written about south India have failed to recognize that the very concept of "empire", at least when it is taken to imply a centralized, territorial state with well-defined boundaries, is a notion of European origin which can seriously mislead the scholar who tries to employ it in a non-western and pre-colonial context. The truth is that such a model is misleading even when applied to medieval *European* political systems! Chronic military conflict, such as that which characterized the relations among pre-modern south Indian kingdoms, is not self-explanatory. Its meaning must be sought in the structural characteristics of the states which habitually engaged in it. Specifically, it must be sought in an understanding of the internal difficulties for which it constituted an imperfect solution.

A basic hypothesis of the present study is that military campaigns of the Chōlas and their Indian rivals, especially those carried out over long distances, constituted a type of compulsive behavior dictated by the urgent needs of statecraft, especially but not exclusively its economic needs: to reaffirm the hero-credentials of kings and princes; to provide potentially restless vassals and their troops with profitable employment in distant places; and to secure access to what S.N. Eisenstadt has called "free-floating resources," such as jewels and other valuables which were not firmly embedded in local communities, to place at the disposal of the court.³ These political needs were in turn related to the continuing importance of redistributive processes in the peasant economy.

The significance of this premise lies in the fact that these aggressive activities were not the accomplishments of all-powerful kings ruling over effectively centralized states, as historians have generally assumed. The royal autocrats and massive bureaucracies so often depicted in the standard textbooks are merely figments of the scholarly imagination, and as long as these vivid images capture

our fancy, they prevent us from understanding the impulses behind persistent predatory activities. Incessant military campaigns, along with monument construction and other self-publicizing activities by the rulers, were integrative strategies designed to compensate for a *lack* of effective political centralization and for the fact that coercive force was not monopolized by the royal court. Imperial conquests were designed to strengthen the fragile political alliances on which the state ultimately rested, and to strengthen the king's capacity to serve as a dispenser of both tangible and intangible rewards. Hence they were intended to reaffirm the ruler's identity as supreme patron and benefactor in the realm: supporter of priests and poets, builder of religious monuments, dispenser of titles and booty, and therefore—at a higher level of abstraction—upholder of society and the cosmic order.

But chronic military activity was more than just a rational, integrative device. It was also a form of compulsive behavior that would long ago have been viewed by historians as a kind of pathological symptom if it were not so characteristic of the medieval state. Just as medical pathology relies upon certain physical symptoms as indicators of systemic disorder, so too political pathology should treat chronic forms of institutionalized violence as symptomatic of internal stresses in the body politic. In other words, institutionalized militarism is never self-explanatory; it always needs to be understood even diagnosed, for it provides important clues to structural features—indeed, to important problems—within the state. This is an unfamiliar point of view because it treats as a symptom a type of activity which is customarily assumed to be a sign of political strength.

Although this particular contention is characteristic of my own approach to the Chōla period, other parts of my argument have received support in recent years from the work of fellow scholars. Thus, the notion that the prevailing conception of the unitary state is an inappropriate model to apply to south Indian kingdoms has been brilliantly discussed by Burton Stein. He argues that contrary to prevailing conceptions, the state's functions were custodial rather than regulative, magico-ritualistic rather than managerial. In an effort to devise a more satisfactory political model than the one to which we are accustomed, Stein has drawn upon anthropological theory, particularly upon Aidan Southall's

analysis of west African politics in terms of the "segmentary state." The segmentary state model readily lends itself to cross-cultural analysis. Indeed, in his book on Alur society, Southall himself has discussed the applicability of this model to medieval European states.⁴

Some brief comments on Southall's use of this theory should suffice to demonstrate its appropriateness as an alternative to the unitary state model. In a segmentary state, territorial sovereignty is limited and relative, forming a series of concentric zones, such that authority is strongest at the center and weakest at the periphery, often shading off into a ritual hegemony.⁵ In addition to the central government, there are also peripheral foci of power over which the center has limited control and which tend to replicate the center's administration on a smaller scale. They also share its exercise of legitimate force. Several levels of subordinate foci may be distinguishable, organized pyramidally in relation to the central authority, such that similar powers are repeated at each level with decreasing range. The more peripheral a subordinate authority is, the more latitude it has to change its allegiance from one power pyramid to another. Segmentary states are thus "flexible and fluctuating," and are interlocked due to the fact that peripheral units may have political standing in two or more adjacent power pyramids.

It would be digressive to pursue Southall's utilization of this model much farther, or to discuss at length Stein's intriguing application of it, modified in certain respects from Southall's description, to the Chōla kingdom. Interested readers may consult Stein's important article on the subject, as well as his monumental book, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, by far the most penetrating analysis of the Chōla state now available.⁶ While Stein's use of the segmentary state theory has already provoked some dissent, and the high level of abstraction at which the model operates tends to limit the precision with which it can explain specific features of any particular state, it is still vastly superior to the naive, unitary-state model which is taken for granted in most of the other scholarly literature on the Chōla period. The Southall-Stein perspective, which posits a complex political system in which central authority is highly constrained and power is shared with subordinate foci of power, is presupposed in my own study,

although the segmentary state model and its terminology are not utilized here in any systematic manner. In any case, I am less concerned than Stein is with demonstrating the continuities in peasant society which underlie the ephemera of Chōla court politics, and more concerned with exploring the dynamic and volatile aspects of state policy.⁷

PLUNDER AND PIETY IN EARLY MEDIEVAL EUROPE

Also relevant to the present study is recent research by specialists in medieval European history. The work of the French scholar Georges Duby deserves special mention because it stresses, in a striking manner, many of the same themes which I have discussed over the years in relation to the Chōla state. Duby's analysis of the early medieval economy of Europe, starting in the seventh and eighth centuries, emphasizes the dual practices of pillage and "necessary generosity." Those proclivities reflect the fact that the culture which developed in the wake of the great folk migrations was a culture of war and predation. Germanic invasions had made the warrior ideal penetrate the aristocratic mentality even in the most romanized territories. But the Frankish aristocracy, in particular, came to be imbued with these predatory attitudes, which constituted the ideological underpinning for the developing Carolingian state. Such attitudes were not wholly elitist. The presence of weapons in peasant graves in this period reflects the supremacy and prestige of the warrior within the predominantly peasant society of the time.⁸ Duby observes that for free men, the legal status of freedom was primarily defined as fitness to participate in military expeditions and to share in the booty—ornaments, weapons, cattle, and captives to sell into slavery—although in the case of royal expeditions the shares were naturally more generous for the king's friends.

The distinction between an army and a mere band of thieves seems to have been primarily a matter of numbers:

P. Grierson has drawn attention to stipulations in the laws of Ine, King of Wessex, which call for the following distinctions to be made between aggressors: if there are less than seven, they are simply thieves; if they are more numerous, they constitute a band of brigands; but if

there are over thirty-five, they may fairly be taken for an army.⁹

The early medieval world, according to Duby, was "wholly imbued with the habit of pillaging and the need for offering. To despoil and to proffer were two complementary actions governing in very large measure the exchange of goods."¹⁰ In the social psychology of the time, generosity was the necessary counterpart of looting. At the end of a successful expedition, the war leader would not keep the loot for himself, but would dispense it to his comrades and also make pious donations. "This is how many English churches, for example, acquired their share of the treasure that Charlemagne and the Frankish army brought back from their campaign against the Avars."¹¹

Many nobles owed their own wealth to the king's generosity, but they too were expected to be open-handed, especially toward their sovereign. Thus gifting was often a reciprocal—though not necessarily equivalent—exchange, and the king's treasury was "forever being whittled away by gifts and replenished with presents and stolen goods."¹² Magnates came to court with gifts, not only as visible symbols of their friendship and submission, but also as contributions to the prosperity of all, since the sovereign was viewed as the natural mediator between the earthly and heavenly realms and therefore a guarantor of abundant harvests and a guardian against plague. Magnates were also expected to be generous toward the wretched and hungry.

It was through seigneurial munificence that early medieval Europe achieved some degree of social justice and reduced total destitution to mere poverty. ... As for kings, their prestige was a reflection of their liberality; they would plunder with seemingly insatiable greed only to give more generously. ... Every gathering around a ruler appears as the high point of a regular system of free exchange, permeating the whole social fabric and making kingship the real regulator of the economy in general.¹³

Thus in an economy of both forcible and voluntary redistribution, governed by concepts of pillage and generosity, the king's treasury played a vital political and economic role. What constituted the real basis of power and prestige, for the king as for others, was not ownership of land but power over men. Royal

generosity kept the unruly nobility in line. Indeed, observes Duby, "the ruler's treasure-house was the seat of his power". And if the king was the principal accumulator, he was also the principal consumer. Treasure was to be displayed, flaunted, shown on grand ceremonial occasions. Kings had to be surrounded by marvels, as well as by a loyal following.

This attitude toward gifting was not confined to aristocratic circles. Society as a whole was permeated by a complex network for circulating the wealth and services occasioned by "necessary generosity": gifts of dependents to their protectors, of relatives to brides, of magnates to kings and kings to magnates, of all the rich to all the poor, and of all mankind to the dead and to God.¹⁴

But gradually this political and economic system of pillage-and-gifting weakened, for by the ninth century it had been pressed to the point of diminishing returns. Predatory wars undertaken by Frankish foot-soldiers against outlying tribes to the north and east had been carried so far that such expeditions were no longer very lucrative. The warriors encountered a world too wild and impoverished to offer much scope for plunder. Observes Duby:

That this aggressiveness began to subside was an economic fact of paramount importance. By reducing the value of spoils brought back to court by the armies in late summer, it gradually exhausted the main source of royal munificence, striking at the sole means whereby the king might keep the aristocracy in check. Thus the political structure built up through conquest started to disintegrate. Thereafter economic development was to take place in an entirely new setting.¹⁵

But as western and portions of central Europe became more peaceful, a new and ironic challenge developed in the form of Viking, Magyar and Saracen invasions. The swift-striking Viking ships and Hungarian horses represented new forms of military technology for which the Frankish foot-soldiers were unprepared and to which they could not respond with sufficient speed. Viking raids hastened the disintegration of the Carolingian state, and the Frankish aristocracy, accustomed for generations to relying upon pillage for its own resources, now found itself forced to hand over accumulated treasures to others.¹⁶

Much more could be said about Duby's enlightening analysis of early medieval state and economy, especially his discussion of the commercial stimulus provided by the liquidation of plundered goods—even those appropriated by the Vikings, since not all of the plunder found its way back to Scandinavia—but enough has been said to indicate that persistent plundering activities certainly have not been a phenomenon peculiar to Indian history, and that cross-cultural comparisons of such phenomena can be very illuminating. Indeed, many of the attitudes discussed by Duby are strikingly similar to those which motivated the Chōla kings. The treasures allocated to pious causes by Charles Martel and Charlemagne have their exact counterparts in the treasures which Rājarāja I looted from the Chēras and Pāṇḍyas and then donated to his great temple in Tanjāvūr.

Structural Features of the Early Chola State

Having considered some theoretical aspects of our subject, we shall now take a closer look at the early Chōla state, under Vijayālaya and his immediate successors, to see how those postulates enhance our understanding of political behavior. One important aspect of the argument should already be clear: The central paradox of the Chōla state is that its expansionist tendencies reflected the inherent limitation of royal power, rather than its concentration, and the consequent necessity to devise profitable enterprises to enrich the court and strengthen its network of subordinate alliances. This compensatory activity, designed to mobilize lesser centers of power for common endeavors of mutual benefit, therefore reflects persistent structural characteristics of the state and the imperatives of its political values. The loose organization of the dynastic state, as well as the multiple demands placed upon its rulers by its political culture—as war leaders, ritual figures, kinsmen, and dispensers of patronage and booty—are vividly illustrated by the emergence and early development of the kingdom ruled by the imperial Chōlas. Here we shall examine only those aspects of the political system that will serve to highlight such structural features, for while the general outlines of Chōla history are familiar to students of medieval south India, essential features of the system have generally been obscured by narrative detail, as well as by historians' unwarranted assumptions about the allegedly authoritarian or despotic nature of kingship and hence about the effectiveness of the court's political control over its hinterland.

The Chōla state arose in the Kaveri basin, at that time—the

ninth century—a fertile yet still turbulent frontier zone between two rival dynastic states ruled by the Pāṇḍya and Pallava dynasties from capitals at Madurai and Kāñchi, to the south and north of the Kaveri basin, respectively. It might be appropriate to speak of those kingdoms as regional “spheres of hegemony,” because they did not constitute highly centralized or clearly defined states with well demarcated boundaries. Such sprawling, dynastic states included not only a heartland, subject to military domination by the royal court, but also a broad and ambiguous hinterland where distance, hill and forest tracts, and the persistence within cultivated as well as less developed territories of local power centers under the control of chiefs or other locality leaders forced dynastic overlords to resort to ingenious strategies designed to elicit symbolic demonstrations of loyalty from peasant communities and other corporate groups within their respective spheres of hegemony. The aim was not to control territory as such, but to dominate people, to secure their loyalty and to integrate some portion of their resources into increasingly higher levels of a predominantly redistributive economy. Gestures of fealty took the form of ceremonial responses to royal communications, the use of rulers' regnal years (in some instances, at least) for dating local inscriptions, and other, similarly public aspects of court-hinterland dialogue. In addition, marriage alliances were arranged with the more powerful of the local lineages; some of these constituted remarkably durable connections, facilitated by arrangements typical of preferential cross-cousin marriage in the so-called Dravidian kinship system.¹

When the imperial Chōla state began to emerge, the Kaveri river, which had already developed into a major core area of agrarian settlement, exhibited a highly ambiguous relationship to the Pallava and Pāṇḍyan kingdoms, for it possessed its own local centers of chiefly power, ready to capitalize on changes of fortune among the imperial overlords. The fact that historians have been unable to determine precisely whether the Chōlas began as “feudatories” of the Pallavas or of the Pāṇḍyas (although Nilakanta Sastri opted for the former) illustrates the inherently ambiguous structure of those dynastic states. While the kings indulged themselves in raids against one another's territories across long

distances, their conflicts were assisted and imitated on a smaller scale by great and small chiefs who fell within their dominions. In fact, it is likely that a primary incentive for such chiefs to acknowledge dynastic overlordship by one of the great powers was the opportunity to advance their own interests against local rivals while clothing their actions in the garb of the overlord's imperial ambition. The expectation of this and other practical benefits of acknowledging allegiance to a royal overlord, much more than the allegedly preponderant military power exercised by the dynastic hegemon—or alternatively, the “moral authority” of the court, as Burton Stein would have it—was what mainly held the loosely-fitting pieces of these dynastic states together.

Thus, the crucial episode in the rise from obscurity of the imperial *chōlas* was an event, initially of purely local significance, that occurred around 850 A.D., namely Vijayālaya's capture of Tañjāvūr from rival chiefs known as the Muttaraiyar. Although the importance of allied assistance is usually overlooked by scholars, military support from the Vēḷir chiefdom of Koḍumbālūr, situated in the frontier tract known as Kōnāḍu, on the southwestern fringe of the Kaveri basin, helped to secure the crucial *Chōla* victory. We can already see at work in this alliance, at the dawn of the imperial *Chōla* era, the important kinship dimension of *Chōla* statecraft, for Vijayālaya gave his daughter² Anupamā (sister of Āditya I) to the Koḍumbālūr chief Samarābhirāma and in the next generation there was a reciprocal exchange of brides between the two houses. Although we lack sufficient genealogical evidence to reconstruct each stage of their relationship, the continuation of this alliance can be traced as late as the reign of Rājendra I (1012–1044), whose Vēḷir queen Viramahādēvi was the sister of the king's military commander (*sēnāpati*), known in the inscriptions as Parakēsari Vēḷār.³ This evidence suggests that marriage alliance with the *Chōlas* created opportunities for service at the highest levels of the *Chōla* state. (To less closely affiliated notables, *Chōla* kings could at least dispense high-sounding titles and material rewards.) And if, as Nilakanta Sastri has suggested, the *Chōlas* in capturing Tañjāvūr were acting as nominal agents of the Pallavas against the Muttaraiyars who were supporters of the Pāṇḍyas, the episode is also an example of how local conflicts

could be carried on in the guise of big-power rivalries, and of how an eminent dynasty like the Pallava could unwittingly sow the seeds of its own destruction even while appearing to expand its empire, since the *Chōlas* subsequently destroyed the remnants of Pallava authority.

By the mid-ninth century, when the *Chōlas* were starting to establish their military predominance in the Kaveri delta—or *Chōlamāṇḍalam*, heartland of the expanding *Chōla* state and the realm in which *Chōla* overlordship would continue to be most visible and enduring—Pallava authority over the hinterland surrounding Kāñchipuram, to the north of the Kaveri basin in that portion of the Coromandel plain known as Tondaimāṇḍalam, was already waning and had become increasingly dependent on allied but opportunistic warriors in southern Karnataka, specifically the Gangas. About a decade after the Pāṇḍyas suffered a crippling defeat at the hands of the Gangas, around the year 880 A.D., the *Chōla* ruler Āditya I (871–907 A.D.) in turn defeated the Pallavas. As both the Pāṇḍyas and Pallavas went into decline (the latter irreversibly so), Tañjāvūr emerged as a major political center, consolidating its supremacy in the Kaveri delta and perhaps gaining some control over the more turbulent Koṅgu country to the west. Not much else is known about Āditya, although it is surely more than just coincidental that he was famed for his lavish patronage to temples. One eulogist attributed to him the construction of Hindu temples all along the Kaveri river.⁴

As the zone of *Chōla* domination gradually expanded to the north and south from the Kaveri basin across the Coromandel plain, the *Chōla* kings like the Pallavas before them, had to cope with problems of internal control and external challenge on an increasingly larger scale.⁵ Their need for effective instruments of power stimulated, as we shall see, the innovations and achievements of the great *Chōla* kings Rājārāja I and his son Rājendra I, with whose reigns, spanning the period 985–1044 A.D., this study is primarily concerned. Yet many of these techniques represented refinements of practices that had their origins in the Pallava period.

CONSIDERATIONS OF POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

To understand the problems that these Chōla sovereigns faced and the benefits of the projects they undertook as a result, we must consider certain aspects of the social landscape in which this dynasty rose to power. To what social institutions and economic realities did the Chōlas have to adapt themselves? What connections with other institutions in their society were utilized or created by the Chōlas in their efforts to tap all of the resources that could serve their political purposes? To frame these questions is not to argue that the Brahmans, peasants, merchants, artisans and other groups within the Chōla domain were merely passive entities, easily manipulated by the court. On the contrary, it was precisely the internal coherence, strength, and adaptability of local communities in their confrontation with superordinate politico-military authorities which constituted a major challenge to kings desiring to tap their human, agricultural and other resources, although it must be added that certain groups were more advantaged in that confrontation than were others.

Of special relevance to the many-layered structure of the dynastic state was the slowly changing and evolving pattern of rural settlement. In Pallava and Chōla times, the zones of settled agriculture in the Coromandel plain were much less extensive than they are today, but far more land was under cultivation than had been utilized in the Classical or so-called Sangam period in the early centuries A.D.⁶ If we could somehow view from a historical geographer's perspective the gradual spread of agrarian settlements at a vastly accelerated speed, as if in time-lapse photography, we would see a gradual spread of the scattered areas of cultivation up the riverine valleys and laterally into the "waste" lands—although not without occasional setbacks—largely at the expense of the tribally-organized peoples who subsisted there by hunting or foraging and, in some instances, shifting cultivation.⁷ This expansion of cultivation was a slow process, but it was facilitated by some specific and highly functional institutions that were well adapted to the assimilation of new lands and peoples into the Hindu fold.⁸

Whether the initial introduction of settled agriculture into the riverine tracts of peninsular south India in ancient times preceded or merely accompanied the spread of Hindu social

organization, with its predilection for hereditary specialization of labor, localized social hierarchies, and Brahmanical ideology providing ritual and moral coherence for the new social order, is a question that can be answered only by further archaeological investigation. (This is only in part a question of chronology, for it also hinges on what definition of "Hinduism"—by no means a timeless or unitary phenomenon—one chooses to adopt, and what physical trace-elements are selected by the investigator to indicate its presence in a given period.) But once introduced and established, as it was by at least the beginning of the Christian era, Hindu society greatly facilitated the further spread of settled agriculture and the simultaneous absorption of tribal peoples into the new social order, although initially in menial roles for all but the tribal leaders.

In short, the expansion of Hindu society, with its complex social hierarchies, was possible because the advanced technology of settled agriculture permitted a greater concentration of population on the land, and that mode of production was in turn facilitated by the functional specialization typical of Hindu social and economic organization. As might be expected, lands with the greatest agricultural potential, in terms of soil conditions and the availability of riverine or tank-fed irrigation, saw the fullest development of this complex socio-economic system, capable of sustaining the activities of many persons not directly engaged in cultivation. Elsewhere, the agrarian social system was necessarily "shallower," in the sense of being less complex and stratified. Coromandel peasant society was variable in its organizational complexity; it was a series of variations on a theme.

Such variability is well known in Tamil tradition. The capacity of contrasting ecological niches to sustain distinctive human lifeways appropriate to each environment is explicitly recognized in ancient Tamil poetic works, which according to the well-known *ññai* concept acknowledge four such environments—agrarian tracts, the coastal-littoral area, forest lands, and the hills—or perhaps five, depending on how the "dry" environment is to be interpreted.⁹ The relationships among the inhabitants of these contrasting environments was to some extent symbiotic—mediated by trade, for example—but also to some degree marked by friction. In the early Tamil country as elsewhere throughout the ancient world,

trade constituted a more orderly societal alternative to plunder, but the dividing line was thin, and itinerant traders, even those who had sprung from the peasantry, were justifiably regarded with suspicion as potential brigands. As for brigandage, that too was generated in part by contrasts between different environments and their productive capacities. And pressure upon the way of life of forest dwellers by inhabitants of the gradually expanding areas of settled agriculture produced sporadic conflict as well as gradual assimilation. Predictably, the agrarian tracts were subjected to predation, including cattle raids, by the less economically secure peoples on their fringes. Many of the "hero stones" erected to fallen defenders of settlements and cattle can be seen today in Indian museums, as well as in some of the rural communities where they were originally erected.¹⁰ Thus the mutual dependence of the various peoples of the Coromandel plain and adjacent hill tracts was an ambiguous one, and it replicated on a smaller scale the uneasy relationships that characterized "diplomacy" among the dynastic states.

Perhaps the most distinctive institutions of the agrarian tracts were the *brahmadēya* settlements, or communities of pious Brahmans, whose deliberative assemblies have left us some of the most detailed and illuminating local records of the Chōla age. As Burton Stein has observed, the topographical distribution of these Brahman settlements reflects the spread of advanced agricultural settlements in general, since maintenance of an entire community of Brahmans required generous support from prosperous satellite villages of peasants. This support presupposes a level of productivity typifying areas of tank and canal irrigation.¹¹ Y. Subbarayalu has painstakingly located these and other communities of the Chōla age through the careful utilization of inscriptional evidence.¹² The gradual proliferation of Brahman communities in the Pallava and Chōla periods was of utmost importance for the ideological integration of the countryside, for their presence reflected the spread, within the context of a predominantly peasant society, of prestigious Sanskritic-Brahmanical knowledge and values. The long-term result was the evolution of a syncretic culture in which Tamil and Sanskritic elements not only coexisted, but increasingly exerted reciprocal influences, creating an important regional variant of Indic culture generally.

Modern political dogma notwithstanding, the relationship between Brahman and peasant was not exclusively or even primarily a dominating or exploitative one, because it was mutually beneficial. Burton Stein has even referred to a persistent Brahman-peasant "alliance" and has described it as the keystone of local south Indian communities in the Pallava-Chōla age.¹³ D. D. Kosambi once explained this relationship by suggesting that Brahmans possessed, in addition to sacred knowledge, a useful theoretical knowledge of agriculture and a practical calendar.¹⁴ Although kings issued charters to create many such Brahman communities, and patronized many of them as well, the royal role was primarily one of facilitation and validation of an essentially local arrangement initiated by locally dominant peasants whose interests such communities served, rather than a forcible imposition of an alien institution upon reluctant hosts. Coercion would in any case have required a degree of force quite beyond the capacity of the court to effect.

It is likely that most Brahmans were not concentrated in those highly-visible settlements, however, but were dispersed among the peasant communities. This pattern, too, implies symbiosis and the integration of Brahmans into the predominantly peasant culture of the time. Brahmans not only provided a complex ritual system that was capable of accommodating local folk deities and practices to its Vedic cults, but also a social ideology, predicated upon hierarchy, that legitimized the dominance over other groups by the privileged elements within the peasantry, notably the Vellālas. Thus one reason for the prominence of the *brahmadēya* in the centuries of Pallava and Chōla rule, and for the ubiquitous presence of Brahmans in other contexts, as well, is that they not only disseminated prestigious Aryan culture within a zone of predominantly non-Aryan traditions, but they also served as an embodiment of the highest aspirations of peasant society, whose culture constituted an amalgam of diverse elements.

Although the importance of Brahman settlements has been recognized for many years, it is only recently that comparable attention has been paid by scholars to the larger, most basic territorial unit of rural society, the *naḍu*, of which Subbarayalu has identified roughly 150, comprising well over a thousand villages, in the Chōla heartland alone, and several hundred more in other

territories.¹⁵ While these localities constituted the building-blocks of the Chōla state, they were neither created by nor dependent upon any such overarching political system for their existence. They may have been primarily economic in origin, since each appears to have contained a single marketing center (*nagaram*), as Kenneth Hall has discovered, and this pattern suggests that the *naḍu* was originally a marketing territory. Perhaps, as Subbarayalu has suggested, it was a kinship territory as well. Certainly the *naḍu* assembly was controlled by the peasantry of the locality, the *naṭṭar*, and served their interests. And it was the *naḍu*, rather than the much-romanticized and allegedly self-governing villages of which it was comprised, that constituted the basic units of peasant decision-making. This is scarcely surprising, when we consider that many features of peasant agriculture, especially activities related to the organization of irrigation, involved the interests of many adjacent villages.

Some of these localities were under the sway of chiefs who had sprung from the peasantry of the *naḍu* although this pattern of chiefship appears to have been most common outside of Chōla-maṇḍalam, especially in interior tracts such as the Koṅgu country, where greater exposure to predation from the nearby hill tracts and relative isolation from the Chōla heartland in the lower Kaveri basin facilitated the persistence of local strongmen. Their acceptance of Chōla hegemony can be seen in the assumption of Chōla titles or inclusion of Chōla royal names in their own titles, and—in some cases—evidence of Chōla matrimonial ties. These were not officials appointed from the court, but local leaders with their own power bases, willing to lend military support to their Chōla overlords for both defense and predation. This high degree of voluntarism implies calculations of advantage, and helps to explain the ambiguous political affiliation of outlying regions of the state, where allegiances could be switched to some rival overlord if conditions warranted.

Persistence of a major dynastic state over a period of several centuries, in the absence of despotic controls at the center, implies widespread attachment to common values and symbols in the countryside. In this respect too, the contributions of Brahmins, especially Smarthas, acting in both individual and collective capacities, was of vital importance. The *brahmadēya* was especially

crucial in fostering the ideological integration of rural society, for it not only institutionalized Vedic learning and its associated ritual activities for the benefit of the local populace, but also provided linkages that were at once horizontal, in the sense of maintaining contacts with similar Brahman communities across *naḍu* boundaries, and also vertical, in the sense of relating to major temples, prestigious *maṭhas*, and other foci for the dissemination of ideas and values. Although there were certainly learned non-Brahmins, even in rural society, there can be little doubt that Brahmins constituted the principal literate elite in rural society. As such, they formed part of an essential transmission network for royal communications, such as providing scribal services for stone and copper-plate inscriptions, including of course the explicitly political and propagandistic component of royal documents.

The appeal of Brahmanical institutions to locality leaders, the *naṭṭar*, was much the same as to the kings, for in both cases the Brahmins supported their status aspirations, providing a kind of moral gloss to the exercise of legitimate but not exclusive authority. Leaders in the localities presided over scaled-down versions of the overlord's domain, small states-within-the-state. And the economic dimension of local support for Brahmanical communities, as for temples and religious institutions generally, may be seen as a form of resource redistribution. In this respect, too, the activities of the court were replicated on a smaller scale at many levels of the political system, in proportion to the disposable resources available to each chief or assembly. As recent research by Kenneth Hall demonstrates, merchant assemblies in *nagaram* marketing centers were also conspicuous in support of such institutions, although the lingering appeal of heterodox cults like Buddhism and Jainism to merchants and artisans gave mercantile patronage a more heterodox character.¹⁶ Patronage of Vaishnavism and even the heterodox cults was by no means unknown even at the Chōla court—Rājarāja's sister Kundavai, for example, appears to have included the Jains in her benefactions—but the keystone of court religion was the cult of Śiva, in connection with which the kings came increasingly to identify themselves as the leading patrons.

The symbolic overlordship of the Chōla kings had a strongly ritualistic character—indeed, it has been described as a form of "sacred" kingship¹⁷—of which several components may be

identified. First, the king was portrayed as an upholder of the social order in the degenerate *Kali yuga*, a period of progressive decline and disorder. This feature is made explicit in the elaborate genealogy of the Chōlas preserved in the Tiruvālaṅkāḍu copper plates from the reign of Rājendra I, an account which traces the descent of the Chōlas from the gods through human sovereigns in each of the four successive ages of cyclic decline to the present (*Kali*) age.^{1*} Second, the king was portrayed as the most generous devotee and patron of gods and Brahmans, possessing a special relationship with both by virtue of his generous gifts. In this respect the king's example was emulated by lesser chiefs who aspired to similar eminence within their own, more circumscribed domains. Finally, the military campaigns of kings were likened to the deeds of gods and heroes, a parallel which we shall later have occasion to mention again.

CHOLA WARFARE AS AN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Perhaps the most intriguing, and certainly the most dramatic, aspect of the previously-mentioned "central paradox" of Chōla power concerns military expansion, for the most conspicuous of the devices which kings employed to compensate for their limited control over vital resources within their own sphere of hegemony was the military expedition, in which allied chiefs and locality warriors could profitably participate. It is tempting to suggest that all Chōla expeditions were mere plundering raids, but the reality appears to have been more complex, the motives mixed. Some campaigns were indeed aimed at expanding territorial hegemony, in the sense of subduing recalcitrant chiefs and reducing them to allied or tributary status. But the stereotyped rhetoric of the inscriptions also characterizes as territorial conquest the most distant raids, into territories over which not even the flimsiest controls could have been imposed and for which the principal rewards must have been intrinsic to the expedition itself.

Several such rewards may be hypothesized. First and foremost was the prospect of plunder. This predatory behavior was not, it is worth repeating, peculiar to the Chōla state, nor even to the Chōla age, since it can readily be detected in the ancient Tamil poems of the Classical Age, and it was certainly not peculiar to Indian states. We have already noted its relevance to the politics

and economy of early medieval Europe in particular. Although the prevalence of plundering activity among the instruments of Chōla statecraft reflects certain internal problems of the dynastic state, the forcible redistribution of certain kinds of booty—especially gold and jewels, perhaps even livestock—may have served as a stimulus to the economy, as was evidently the case in Europe. Another likely advantage of such military activity was the opportunity to keep potentially restless troops engaged in distant campaigns. They could be maintained under arms, but not wholly at crown expense, and enemies could be forced onto the defensive. Thus inter-dynastic wars served as a convenient means of mobilizing and maintaining under arms an assemblage of warriors which, for reasons of dynastic prestige, rulers had little desire to disband or scale down to fit the court's own, limited income from its core territories.

Inherent in this situation was an odd dilemma, namely the necessity of continually utilizing peasant-warriors thus mobilized in order to provide for their own maintenance. Like the juggler who tries to keep many balls or other objects in the air at once, the aspiring warrior-hero king who wished to maintain a sizable military force under royal command was continually compelled to set it in motion. The more ambitious the king and the more extensive the sphere of his claimed dominion, and hence the larger the force he wished to maintain, the farther afield the warriors ranged in search of profit and glory.

It is no mere coincidence that the most ambitious and successful of the great Cholas, Rājārāja I and Rājendra I, either led or sent (and on this point there is often a calculated ambiguity in the records) their forces to Sri Lanka and the Strait of Malacca, as well as across vast stretches of India's own terrain as far north as the Ganges. Unquestionably, the dramaturgy inherent in "conquering the Ganges" had great appeal to Rājendra, who made skilful use of its symbolism. But to accept naively the claim that this was the exclusive purpose of the expedition would require that we view Rājendra as an obsessive, perhaps even demented, autocrat who was willing to mount a major military campaign just to secure some water from the Ganges—a mere gesture, however grand. The compulsiveness of his military activities was not the result of some personal aberration, but was intrinsic to the politico-military

system itself, a system in which the momentum of imperial expansion necessitated additional conquests and a further search for fresh resources, to the point of diminishing returns. Such, at any rate, is the central hypothesis upon which our examination of Chōla overseas expansion rests.

This feature of Chōla statecraft has been misunderstood for the same reason that the structure of the state has been misunderstood—because of unexamined assumptions about the supposedly unitary nature of the state. Direct evidence about military organization in the inscriptions is admittedly sketchy and susceptible to alternative interpretations, but that is all the more reason to question conventional scholarly suppositions. One clear feature of the evidence, however, is that it demonstrates the division of military forces in the Chōla period into a large number of discrete units—I am tempted to call them “segments,” by analogy with the segmentary structure of the state itself—each with its own name and distinctive identity. These units are generally referred to in the scholarly literature as “regiments,” as if to suggest that they were merely convenient organizational divisions within an essentially unified military structure, but this generic term has merely been inferred by scholars, since there is no word in the records to which it directly corresponds. One occasionally encounters a general term such as *niyāyam*, which merely means a collection, body, or group, as in the case of the Niyāyam Perundanattu Valaṅgai-Vēlaikkāran-paḍaigal, or “body of servants of the right hand of the large treasure,” said to be attached to the great temple at Tañjāvūr.¹⁹ “Regiment” would be a rather imaginative word to employ in this context.

Nearly a century ago, the names of thirty-three of the so-called “regiments” were collected by Rao Bahadur Venkayya, who seems to have given that word its currency, from the Tañjāvūr inscriptions and this list is usually cited in discussions of the Chōla army.²⁰ It should be noted that these were not all separate and equivalent units, since an examination of the individual records in which their names occur reveals that some groups were in fact subdivisions of others. That they were all merely components of a single, unified Chōla military structure is, however, very doubtful. Nevertheless, Nilakanta Sastri’s discussion of these names in *The Cōlas* conveys

the impression that they were indeed parts of a single military system and that their growth was cumulative :

The names of over thirty regiments mentioned in Rājārāja’s inscriptions have been collected by Venkayya and the list can easily be extended to about seventy by adding to it names that can be drawn from the records of other regins before and after Rājārāja. Each of these names clearly commemorated the time when the regiment was constituted, and it possibly recalled, to the minds of contemporaries, the exact occasion for it. ...These names of regiments constitute evidence of the gradual growth of the army in the early days of Cōla expansion and to some extent also of the nature of the different sections of it. We hear for instance of the elephant corps (*ānaiyāṭkaḷ*, *kunjiramallar* etc.), the cavalry (*kudiraiccēvagar*), and several divisions among the infantry.²¹

There is in fact little evidence, to suggest that these groups were anything more than ad hoc units organized as particular circumstances warranted. Their names, themselves compounds of descriptive name-segments, are diverse and reflect the characteristics of the predominantly peasant society from which the warriors were recruited. Some names incorporate geographical designations, such as the *malaiyālar* troops from present-day Kerala. Many of the names include the *valaṅgai* designation, a reference to the “right hand” division of non-Brahman castes and a term that was particularly associated in the Chōla period with the dominant peasantry of the Coromandel plain. Burton Stein has suggested, that these particular units may have been “recruited to the military adventures of the Cholas from existing military units among the peasantry.”²²

Many of the names include various synonyms for the reigning king—or so we may infer, although some of these royal appellations are known only from these particular records. But while this nomenclature indicates their political allegiance, it does not require that we view them as permanent units in a standing royal army. For example, a group of archers that included the name “Paṇḍita Chōla”—possibly a reference to Rājendra Chōla—in their own name was called Paṇḍita-sōla-terinda-villigal, or the “chosen archers of Paṇḍita Chōla.” But we know that it was one of

several military groups attached to the Tañjāvūr temple—indeed, it was a subdivision of the *niyāyam* mentioned above—perhaps to protect the temple treasury.²² While we cannot absolutely rule out the possibility that this was a royal contingent that was merely assigned to temple protection, the evidence does not require that interpretation. Like the other so-called regiments in Venkayya's list, it is known not because of surviving records of its military accomplishments, but because it is mentioned in connection with a grant to a temple. In short, the evidence that is generally cited to illustrate the large and diversified character of a standing royal army turns out, on close examination, to be nothing of the kind.

It should be mentioned in this connection that not one of those military units appears to have had any naval function. If the notion of a large and permanent Chōla standing army is fanciful, then the putative Chōla "navy" that is so often mentioned in historians' writings is even more so, its existence wholly inferred from vague references to Rājarāja's alleged conquest of the "twelve thousand old islands of the sea"—sometimes said to be the Maldives, although that identification, like the claim itself, is doubtful—and of course the Chōla involvement in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. The existence of such a permanent navy cannot be demonstrated, nor was it really required, since all that we need to assume in order to account for Chōla overseas is a tradition of maritime experience and foreign contacts among the Tamils generally, a heritage that is easy to demonstrate. It is as reasonable to hypothesize an ad hoc armada of south Indian ships carrying warriors across the seas as it is to postulate military expeditions on land consisting of temporary assemblages of diverse warrior groups. These skeptical considerations need not diminish our appreciation of Chōla military achievements, of course. Indeed, they make the more spectacular deeds appear all the more impressive for their ingenuity.

The Splendid Sovereigns: Rājarāja I and Rājendra I

Since the process of overseas expansion with which we are concerned took its inspiration from the ambitions of Rājarāja I and his son Rājendra I, we shall examine relevant features of their reigns in this chapter, confining the discussion to a few basic points. The reigns of Rājarāja and Rājendra, spanning the years from 985 to 1044 A.D., constitute in many ways a distinctive period in which political and military developments were more vivid and spectacular than in any comparable period of south Indian history prior to the rise of the Vijayanagara state in the second quarter of the fourteenth century. In terms of conventional periodization, those years comprise the exuberant beginning of a "middle Chōla" phase of the dynasty's history, the 85 years from 985 to 1070 A.D., which opened energetically with the accession of Rājarāja I and closed more soberly with that of his great-grandson¹ Kulōttuṅga I (known as Rājendra II of the Eastern Chālukya line of Vengi before he ascended the Chōla throne), to whose lot it fell to retrench by ending the increasingly troublesome Chōla involvement in Sri Lanka. This "middle Chōla" phase is therefore more meaningful than are most such periodizations based on mere reign-dates, for it coincides with a dramatic phase of long-term, cyclical expansion and contraction of the Chōla imperial "balloon," which reached its maximum amplitude under Rājendra I. (The term *balloon* is used here to suggest the transient character of distant Chōla conquests and the lack of administrative machinery behind them.) Not surprisingly, art historian S. R. Balasubrahmanyam, who has written about "middle Chōla temples"—as well as those of other periods—also views this as a discrete phase on aesthetic grounds.² The architectural puffery, or royal self-glorification,

associated with the court-sponsored Siva cult achieved a remarkably grand style of expression in those years.

We know more about the early part of that "middle Chola" phase, the Rājārāja/Rājendra years from 985 to 1044, than about any comparable segment of Chōla history, thanks to the wealth of inscriptions from those two reigns. This too is no mere coincidence, since an important facet of Rājārāja's innovative genius lay in his recognition of the importance of effectively utilizing available political instruments, including techniques of royal publicity and self-dramatization. Official communications were a major element of this feature of Chōla statecraft. Although various means of enhancing the court's influence and authority were theoretically available to kings, especially those involving the dissemination of royal publicity through various channels, numerous rulers—perhaps due to peculiarities of taste, talent, or ambition—neglected many such potential instruments of prestige. And it is easy to see that if a king chose to express his grandeur through media other than inscriptions and monuments—say, through spectacular but unrecorded sacrifices—he could be utterly lost to history. Thus there is only a rough correlation between what we know about a king (or dynasty) and the effective power which he (or it) really exercised. In this context it is risky for historians to argue from silence.

An abundance of evidence about a particular king or period can also be deceptive. Royal inscriptions were the official press releases and advertising claims of their day. It is easy to be misled by royal eulogists if we naively accept what kings wanted their contemporaries to believe about them. But should we then conclude that the prominence which a dynasty like the Chōla or particular kings like Rājārāja enjoy in the history books is simply a function of the fact that those rulers publicized themselves more extensively and made more extravagant claims? Such an inference would exaggerate the problem, I think. Like any modern advertising campaign, the court's inscriptional "advertisement" had to be backed up by a substantial "account." And in a political system in which royal prestige was of major importance, appearances were part of the reality. Moreover, from the historian's point of view, the actual geographical distribution of Chōla inscriptions in the countryside can serve as a useful index to the court's effective

"reach" into its hinterland.³ For example, the presence of Chōla temples and inscriptions in Sri Lanka, along with complaints about Chōla activities that were preserved in the island chronicles, make the fact of substantial Chōla inroads there indisputable. (See the discussion in chapter four.)

There is another aspect of this question that deserves comment, namely the ritually incorporative aspect of kingship. Most lithic and copper-plate inscriptions which acknowledge Chōla imperial hegemony were intended to record gifts to gods or Brahmans, but only a modest proportion of these donations actually represented gifts from the court. Gifts were presented by local chiefs, locality assemblies, merchants, and others who routinely sought the sanction and sometimes the protection of the court for such grants. In part, these pious donations implied a conscious emulation of the prestigious behaviour of the court by leaders in many localities and public acknowledgement of that imitative behavior. But more importantly, it implied widespread public acceptance of the virtue of "necessary giving" and of the special mole of sacred kingship in presiding over a moral and economic order based on such pious generosity. Thus we cannot overlook the importance of *sacred* kingship, as well as kingship in its martial aspects, in accounting for the persistence of Chōla hegemony over such wide stretches of the Coromandel plain, even in the absence of direct royal "administration" in most of the hinterland.

RAJARAJA I : REVERSING THE CHOLA DECLINE

It is risky to attribute psychological traits to individuals long dead, especially when they are known to us primarily through a medium such as inscriptions in which information is so susceptible stereotyping, but with regard to Rājārāja I and Rājendra I, a cautious generalization is appropriate. The pattern of their overlapping reigns appears to be that of the brilliant, innovating father and the competitive, emulating son. The father refined available political instruments and devised new ones, establishing in the process a kind of royal cult of personality. The son inherited those arrangements, and with them the problem of asserting his own personality in spite of the deep impression of his predecessor's character on those institutions. Rājārāja's very success in mobilizing political resources bequeathed to his son the

problem of matching the father's deeds. In particular, the momentum of Chōla military expansion had to be maintained and more ambitious objectives achieved. Rājendra's need to establish his own reputation by surpassing his father's achievements accounts for the quixotic character of his most daring military campaigns, north to the Ganges and eastward into Southeast Asia. It also clarifies his otherwise puzzling effort to establish a new capital and an impressive temple at Gaṅgaikondaṇḍapuram in honor of his alleged Gangetic conquest, perhaps even before his father's grand temple at Tanjāvūr had been completed. Thus when we look closely at these two reigns, we perceive that what appears at first glance to be a relationship of harmony and continuity is in fact an instance of subtle, inter-generational tension and competition. Those reigns also demonstrate a long-term response to more objective economic problems related to the need to secure fresh resources. These problems of leadership and resources were of course related, since redistributive processes—of which the sharing of plunder was, however, only one form—operating at every level of the social system served important integrative functions for the state.

What did Rājarāja achieve? His accomplishments were of two kinds. The first consisted of his reorganization of the Chōla alliance system, in disarray following military setbacks at the hands of the Rāshtrakūṭas, and then the vigorous employment of Chōla military forces in south India and Sri Lanka to expand the zone of Chōla hegemony. The second consisted of his refinement of various ideological or propaganda devices designed to enhance the definition of the Chōla state as a moral order and to dramatize and strengthen the symbolic dominance of the court over the Coromandel peasantry.

When Rājarāja came to the throne in 985 A. D., the Chōla kingdom had not yet recovered from a shattering military defeat suffered at the hands of the Rāshtrakūṭas in 949 A. D. The court had then endured a thirty-year period, following the death of Parāntaka I in 955, of brief reigns and apparent factional strife, an interlude whose complexities even the astute K. A. Nilakanta Sastri was unable completely to untangle.⁴ That confusing interval marked the close of the "early Chōla period," from 850 to 985 A. D.,

which had also constituted the first long-term cycle of expansion and contraction of Chōla power. Chōla expansion in that period had reached its peak during Parāntaka's reign, in the first half of the tenth century, when the area of putative Chōla hegemony had spread until it encompassed, albeit unevenly, an area from roughly Nellore in the north to Cape Comorin in the south, and from the Coromandel coast to the mountainous frontiers of Kerala in the west. It did so, of course, not merely by out-and-out military conquest, but by a complex process of intimidating and wooing neighboring domains and drawing powerful chiefs and petty kings into the Chōla network of alliances, some of them more firmly so than others. It is significant that among the lands brought under Chōla overlordship, those located to the north of the Kaveri, in the heart of the former Pallava domain in Tondaimaṇḍalam, had fallen under Chōla sway prior to Parāntaka's accession in 907, while the more troublesome Pāṇḍyan territories, to the south, had remained unassimilated. Parāntaka had zealously directed Chōla energies southward, overrunning the Pāṇḍyan kingdom (perhaps more than once) but ultimately effecting little more than a sullen submission. Unlike many other powerful lineages, the Pāṇḍyas resisted incorporation into the Chōla alliance system and thereby posed a situation of continuing ambiguity and danger in the southernmost territories over which the Chōlas asserted their hegemony. Indeed, intermittent armed resistance to Chōla rule continued there throughout the Chōla period. As we shall see in the next chapter, the Chōlas were drawn into the affairs of Sri Lanka not just because of the prospect of rich plunder there, but also because of the close connection which had developed between the political affairs of that island and continuing resistance to Chōla overlordship in the Pāṇḍya country.

But it was a threat from the north which finally burst the Chōla imperial balloon in 949 A. D. Under their aggressive sovereign Kṛishṇa III, the Rāshtrakūṭas, who had developed their own capacity for long-distance predatory raids from their capital at Mānyakhēṭa (Malkhed) in Karnataka, invaded the Coromandel plain and inflicted a crushing defeat on Chōla forces at the battle of Takkolam. The invaders then marched through the Chōla country, evidently sacking both Kāñchipuram and Tanjāvūr in the process, so that Kṛishṇa was able to assume the title *Kachiyum*

Tanjaiyum-Koṇḍa, by which he boasted of their conquest. Thereafter, as Nilakanta Sastri has characterized the situation, a "heavy gloom" settled over the shattered Chōḷa realm. The defeat undoubtedly contributed to the confusion at the Chōḷa court that followed Parāntaka's death a few years later. It was from this distress that Chōḷa fortunes were finally rescued in Rājaraḷa's reign.

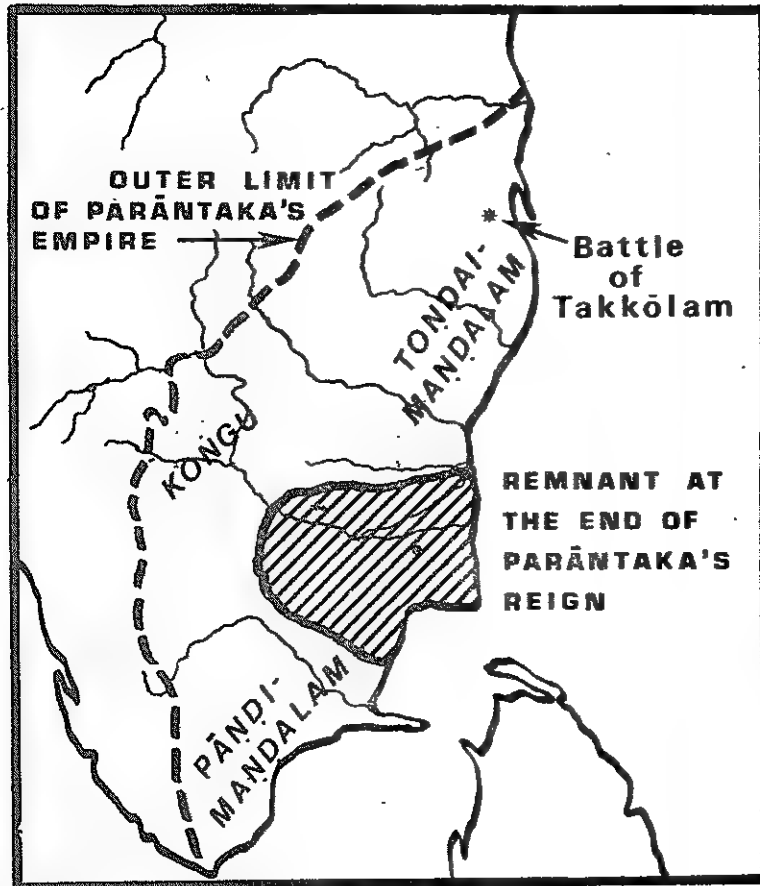


Figure 1: The Chōḷa Dominion and its Collapse Under Parāntaka I

Part of Rājaraḷa's genius lay in his organizational ability and his enthusiasm for grand projects. There are intriguing bits of information in Rājaraḷa's inscriptions which reflect his skill in mobilizing peasant military power. In his reign the term *vaḷaṅgai*, or "right hand," begins to appear in the names of some Chōḷa military contingents—the so-called "regiments" referred to earlier—and this strongly suggests the voluntary participation of warriors recruited from the Coromandel peasantry. The term *vēḷaikkarar* is also prevalent among such warrior groups, often conjoined with the term *vaḷaṅgai*. Venkayya, Stein and other scholars have plausibly interpreted *vēḷai* to mean "occasional" service—that is, sporadic or mercenary, rather than permanent and professional service. That view was disputed by Nilakanta Sastri, who contended that they were permanent contingents of a powerful standing army.⁵ Stein, however, reasons that *vēḷaikkarar* troops were recruited on an ad hoc basis from among "existing organizations" in agrarian localities, a very different supposition.⁶ As we shall see in connection with Sri Lanka, the Polonnaruva inscription of Vijayabāhu I refers to "left hand" troops, the *iḍaṅgai vēḷaikkarar*, probably recruited from mercenary soldiers affiliated with itinerant Tamil merchants. But the fact that this evidence regarding "left hand" warriors first appears only in the twelfth century means that either the *iḍaṅgai* troops were slower to organize themselves, as Stein believes, or else the Chōḷas were more reluctant to utilize such troops—alongside their *vaḷaṅgai* warriors—than were the Buddhist kings of Sri Lanka.

PRASASTI, OR THE KING'S PUBLIC RELATIONS

Chōḷa kingship, as we have already noted, consisted of far more than military activity. It had a strongly symbolic and ceremonial character as well, although the distinction between these features was blurred; that is, the martial behavior, too, was pervaded with myth and symbolism. Since heroic acts served little political purpose unless they were widely proclaimed, they were extolled in eulogies rich in hyperbole and in cosmic significance. That is scarcely surprising, since for centuries the exploits of Tamil kings had been extravagantly described by poets. Even the grisliest of deeds had been immortalized in the classical *puṇam* poems. In the imperial Chōḷa age, royal motives—valor,

destruction, plunder, fame—were much the same as in ancient times, but the mode of expression had subtly altered in conformity with the continuing spread of prestigious Aryan culture in the south. Epic and puranic archetypes of the eternal hero (e.g., the *deva* locked in eternal combat with the evil *asura*) were more prevalent as role-models, and the associated virtue of generosity to Brahmins and to Vedic gods and temples more in evidence as well. Yet paradoxically, the distinctive personalities of individual kings also began to emerge more forcefully.

A major innovation of Rājārāja's reign, and one whose importance has not escaped the attention of previous scholars, is the use of official, stereotyped forms of the prefatory eulogy, called *prasaṣṭi* in Sanskrit, for royal inscriptions. No longer a spontaneous praise-statement of widely variable content, it now assumed a more standardized yet expandable form which catalogued the military accomplishments of the king. When combined with the sovereign's regnal year, the eulogy became, among other things, a cumulative list of the king's putative conquests at a particular moment in time. Like a modern-day-press release, it presented the court's own version of events, and the image of the king as he wished it to be generally perceived.

If royal publicity was enhanced in these years, so too were the martial deeds which it extolled. Not only did Rājārāja revive Chōḷa power, he also sent Chōḷa expeditions in all directions, ranging from Vengi and the Deccan plateau, in the north and west, to Sri Lanka and the Malabar coast in the south. The northern campaigns drew the Chōḷas into increasing conflict with the emerging, or perhaps re-emerging, power of the Chāḷukyas. With respect to the southern campaigns, Rājārāja was anxious to dominate the Pāṇḍyan kingdom and claimed to have conquered Madurai. Nilakanta Sastri states that he "clearly sent more than one expedition against the Pāṇḍya and his ally the Cēra."¹ Rājārāja invaded Karnataka to subdue the Nolambas and Gangas and also to secure, or perhaps merely strengthen, Chōḷa overlordship in the disputed Koṅgu country. The precise sequence of these many campaigns is difficult to establish, although Nilakanta Sastri has made a valiant effort to do so in *The Cōḷas*.² Toward the end of Rājārāja's reign, the king claimed conquest of the "twelve thousand old islands of the sea"—a purely rhetorical

number—and Nilakanta Sastri, among others, has rather freely interpreted this as a reference to the Maldives. In fact, in the absence of further information it is hard to determine what, if any, reality lay behind that nebulous claim. Along with other cryptic assertions in the Chōḷa records, it has been cited to support doubtful scholarly theories about a large Chōḷa navy, for which it actually provides scant support. That the phrase does indicate an increasing Chōḷa interest in lands beyond India's shore and claiming control of them is, however, clear enough.

An even more cryptic piece of evidence which has been cited in this connection is the puzzling phrase *Kaṇḍalūr-śalāik-kalamarutta*, which features prominently in Rājārāja's records from very early in his reign and, even more curiously, recurs among the claims of several of his successors, down to Kulōttuṅga I. Imitative claims are by no means unusual in Chōḷa eulogies, but this assertion seems to have been especially popular. In pursuit of his great-navy thesis, Nilakanta Sastri favored "who destroyed the fleet in the roadstead of Kāṇḍalūr" as the correct reading of the phrase, but he also skeptically acknowledged alternative interpretations.³ T.N. Subramaniam and others, including most recently Burton Stein, have interpreted the phrase to signify a purely ideological victory, in which Rājārāja managed to secure for the Chōḷa court the services of a prestigious *śalāi*, or Sanskrit school (from Skt. *śala*), possibly but not certainly located at Kāṇḍalūr near Trivandrum, where secular as well as sacred learning was available.⁴

Although much of the epigraphical evidence that historians have cited to demonstrate professional military—and especially naval—organization during Rājārāja's reign must be set aside as unconvincing, we are still left with a vivid impression of vigorous military activity and hegemonic expansion. The ambition and dynamism indicated by Rājārāja's campaigns is extraordinary. That these campaigns offered their participants important opportunities for both glory and profit is indicated, for example, by the fact that several of these campaigns were led by his son Rājendra and that by the king's sixteenth regnal year a certain Nolambādhirāja is also mentioned as a Chōḷa general, the Nolambas evidently, having by this time seen the advantage of attaching their fortunes to the rising star of Chōḷa power.

Perhaps the most dramatic military clashes took place in the Deccan, where the born-again Chālukyas, replacing the eclipsed Rāṣṭrakūṭa power after 973 A.D., attempted to halt Chōla depredations and claimed to have inflicted severe losses on the Chōlas. (There is unintended humor in each side's extravagant claims of victory over the other.) But in an unusually candid complaint about Chōla destruction, a Chālukya record of 1007 A.D. from Hoṭṭūr admits that Rājendra led an enormous Chōla force (of nine lakhs!) that pillaged the countryside, despoiling women and killing Brahmans, women, and children.¹¹ The inscription naturally includes a claim of subsequent Chālukya victory over this brazen horde, preliminary to a conquest of the entire "southern quarter." All this sounds very much like political propaganda of a modern type, but there is no reason to doubt the reality of pillaging, which was an integral part of such distant Chōla raids.

ART FOR POLITICS' SAKE

Like the Frankish kings of early medieval Europe, Rājaraja too fulfilled his charitable obligations—his "necessary giving"—in an extravagant way, aggressively acquiring booty only to donate more lavishly to temples and Brahmans. Rājaraja's most enduring project was his sponsorship of the Rājarajesvara temple (i. e., the Śiva temple of Rājaraja) in his capital, Tanjāvūr. It is today one of the best-known temples in India and is undoubtedly the most impressive, single surviving monument to the Chōla regime, as Rājaraja surely intended it to be. Its construction, along with the detailed epigraphic record of lavish support for its ritual activities by the king, his relatives, and his officials, is another remarkable tribute to Rājaraja's ability to mobilize resources. The *vimāna* of the central shrine reaches a height of over 63 meters—more than 200 feet—and is capped by a huge *śikhara*, estimated to weigh 25 tons, the raising of which must have been a formidable task. According to local tradition, the feat was accomplished by the expedient of an inclined plane of sand which began at a village some four miles away.

Embellishing the outer walls of the shrine are two tiers of large, sculptural figures, the lower ones portraying Śiva in a variety of forms and the upper ones depicting Śiva as Tripurāntaka in

many poses. The inner sanctum or *garbhagṛiha* contains a *liṅga* of spectacular size. The grand style of the temple conveys an impression of power and magnificence. Even if we lacked the strong confirmation which the inscriptional records of lavish royal gifts provide, we would still realize that this was a very special project.

The themes of royal power and devotion are especially evident in the remarkable frescoes which adorn the chambered vestibule, or corridor, that separates the outer and inner walls of the *garbhagṛiha* and surrounds the sanctum sanctorum on all four sides. The walls of these chambers—or some chambers, at any rate—are adorned with remarkable Chōla paintings, unfortunately concealed since the seventeenth century by another layer of paintings of the Nāyak period and therefore difficult to recover without destroying the more recent art, except where the outer layer has already peeled away.

A few of the visible Chōla paintings deserve comment because of their political overtones. In the chamber which S. R. Balasubrahmanyam calls no. 5 (if they are numbered clockwise), there is a forest scene depicting, amid several human and animal figures, an enormous Śiva as Dakṣiṇāmūrti, seated in yogic posture on a tiger skin. In the lower left-hand corner appear Rājaraja and his guru Karuvūr Dēvar paying homage to Śiva. In chamber no. 9 is depicted the temple of Naṭaraja at Chidambaram as it appeared in Rājaraja's day. The scene not only features the dominating figure of the dancing Naṭaraja, but also shows Rājaraja and three of his queens. The much-damaged picture on the opposite wall includes, among other things, another depiction of the king and his guru. But the most spectacular of the paintings thus far uncovered is found on the inner and north-facing wall of chamber no. 11. It shows Śiva at Tripurāntaka, a warrior-conqueror mounted on a chariot, arms bristling with weapons and ready to do battle with the asuras. C. Sivaramamurti observes that "Rajaraja chose this great theme from his predecessors the Pallavas and gave it a prominence hitherto unknown." He adds :

Here [are] the great paraphernalia...like the earth chariot on sun and moon wheels, drawn by the Vedas as steeds, driven by Brahmā as charioteer, the tremendous

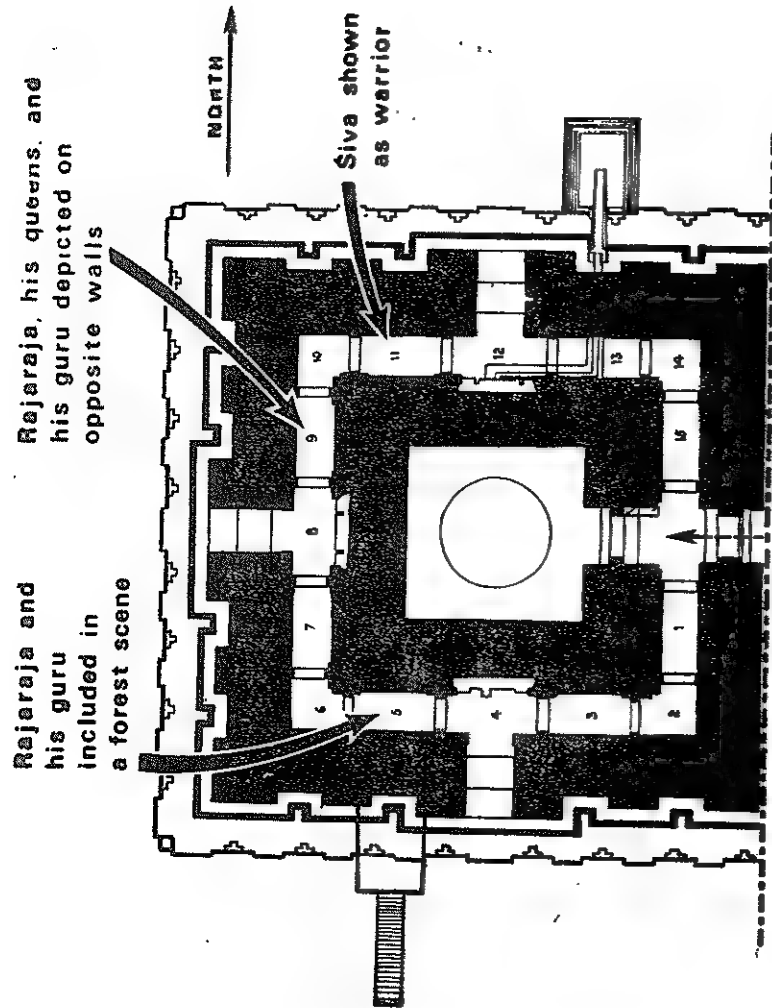


Figure 2 : Locations of Notable Paintings, Central Shrine, Rājaraṣvara Temple, Tanjāvūr (adapted from S.R. Balasubrahmanyam, *Middle Chola Temples*)

bow and string composed respectively of Meru and Vāsuki, with Viṣṇu as arrow, and the entire host of immortals as aid here indicated by Gaṇeśa, Kārttikeya, and Kālī [are] rendered in a manner to suggest that they were utterly superfluous as the very knit brow of [Śiva] ..in a posture of ease was enough to drive dismay into the hearts of the enemy host.¹²

Of this same scene, S. R. Balasubrahmanyam remarks: "It is no wonder, Rājaraṣa I or his court painter chose this theme; was not the story of Tripurantakara the theme of Rājaraṣa's life itself, of a great warrior, a great benefactor, a king among kings?"¹³ There seems to have been a special effort in the middle Chōḷa period to assimilate the divine and royal roles: gods were made to appear king-like and kings to appear god-like.

The fact that this temple was constructed in a location not previously regarded as especially sacred, but was of purely political significance, suggests why it was possible to construct a landmark of the Śiva cult which was at the same time a monument to Chōḷa grandeur, tailored to suit the tastes of its patron. In his discussion of the many metallic images contributed to the temple by Rājaraṣa and other court figures, Balasubrahmanyam comments on the theme of royal self-glorification by observing that "as if to commemorate his undying name in the history of this country, he built a grand temple and showered all his wealth and war-won booty on the construction and embellishment of this temple and endowed it with stupendous wealth..."¹⁴ The temple celebrated the glory of Śiva; it also celebrated the king's patronage and devotion. Our inscriptional sources even include a tantalizingly brief reference to a drama, the "Rājaraṣvara-nāṭaka," which was performed at an annual festival.¹⁵ The troop of actors was supported out of the royal treasury. Venkayya has argued that since Rājaraṣa was born under the asterism Śatabishaj (Śadayam), the twelve monthly festivals at the Tanjāvūr temple which were provided for the days of Śadayam were in honor of the king's birthday.¹⁶ That suggestion is plausible in view of other references in Chōḷa records to commemoration of royal birthdays. For example, in the Tirumukkūḍal inscription of Virarājendra, we find that royal funds were provided to a temple not only to maintain a hospital and a Vedic school and hostel, but also to

defray expenses connected with "a grand offering to be made on the occasion of the king's birthday anniversary."¹⁷ Even Chōla queens had their birthdays celebrated at selected temples.¹⁸

The lavish gifts and endowments to the Tañjavūr temple in the form of gold, jewelry, lands, and livestock to provide ghee for temple lamps—chiefly from members of the court and military contingents, but also from merchants and other private individuals—were intended to provide for a host of temple servants (accountants, watchmen, astrologers, goldsmiths, drummers, parasol-holders and many other functionaries) as well as dancing girls and musicians to sing *Dēvāram* hymns, and to supply the numerous expendable items connected with temple ritual, such as scenting the bathing water of the gods.¹⁹ We can glimpse through these detailed temple records a small part of the elaborate, redistributive arrangements which permeated the economy of the period. Not only was the temple a major employer and consumer, but also a creditor, in that money and livestock were indefinitely assigned to local shepherds, in return for supplying specified amounts of ghee for temple lamps, in order to carry out the terms of perpetual endowments.²⁰

Although a large proportion of the king's conveyable offerings—other than land donations—is merely described as coming from the royal treasury, presumably originating primarily in tax levies imposed in the Chola heartland but possibly in tribute or plunder exacted from more distant localities as well, many other gifts are more explicitly described as booty or treasure appropriated from the defeated Chēra and Pāṇḍyan kings.²¹ Other gifts were offered on singular occasions, including a joyous victory over the Chālukya king Satyaśraya—no doubt during the same campaign complained of in the Hoṭṭūr inscription—and we can only speculate on how much of that particular donation was acquired by plunder. In addition, forty specified communities, scattered across the Chōla domain, were required to supply to the temple a total of 120, 119 *kalams* of paddy and 1004 gold *kaṣu*.²² It should also be noted, in connection with our discussion of Sri Lanka in the next chapter, that a few villages there were requested to make contributions to the temple in the form of paddy, money, or oil (so-called *mahua* butter) from seeds of the *iluppai* tree (or *iruppai*, the south Indian *mahua*, *Bassia longifolia*), to be used in temple lamps.²³

RAJENDRA I AND THE PROBLEM OF SUCCESSION

Inscriptions of Rājendra, too, have found their place in the Tañjavūr temple. Indeed, it is from one of these that we obtain the sparse details of Rājendra's "Śrīvijaya" expedition to the Strait of Malacca. But his records at Tañjavūr seem obscured by the pervasive presence of Rājarāja, and this problematic juxtaposition of ubiquitous father and emulating son seems to be a manifestation of the fundamental dilemma of Rājendra's reign. Rājendra led some of the military campaigns undertaken during his father's reign—Chōla conquests of which Rājarāja naturally boasts in his own records—and for two years, starting in 1012 A.D., Rājendra's reign overlapped that of his father, since he was appointed as co-regnant *yuvaraja*, a sort of glorified heir apparent, and began to date his own records from that time. This relationship accounts in part for the similarity of their military claims, but there is more to it than that.

Here it is appropriate to elaborate on the ambivalent relationship between father and son which was suggested earlier in this chapter. In assessing and comparing the two reigns, a historian is likely to have an initial impression of smooth continuity, of Rājendra building on his predecessor's accomplishments and carrying Chōla glory to new heights. This is in fact the conventional view. In the authoritative interpretation of K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, Rājendra's reign marked the apogee of Chōla accomplishment. Rājendra, he says,

succeeded in raising the Cōla empire to the position of the most extensive and most respected Hindu state of his time, and one which possessed though perhaps only for a time a not inconsiderable dominion over the Malay peninsula and the Eastern archipelago.²⁴

Elsewhere, he remarks that the closing years of Rājarāja's reign constituted the "most splendid period of the history of the Cōlas of the Vijayalaya line."²⁵ His view seems to be that Rājendra's reign was not only the continuation, but also the fulfillment of his predecessor's achievements.

A more sober and less partisan assessment might suggest that Rājendra was in effect riding a tiger (the Chōla emblem—an appropriate metaphor!) from which it was difficult to dismount.

Having inherited a political system in which dramatic symbolism, warrior prestige, and lavish generosity on a dramatically heightened scale were all highly visible aspects of royal behavior, Rājendra was forced to compete with his own father's impressive record of accomplishment. In doing so, he evidently felt compelled to construct a separate capital and grand temple for himself, to undertake the most ambitious and quixotic military expeditions, to assert the most inflated claims of conquest, and to continue to expand the ever-widening pattern of long-distance plundering raids to the point of diminishing returns.

Again, it must be emphasized that this problematic side of Chōla rule has not been sufficiently appreciated, since the notion persists that Rājendra inherited a powerful bureaucratic system and administered a highly centralized state. It should be recognized that the building of large temples does not necessarily presuppose powerful, authoritarian states, as anthropologist David Kaplan has convincingly demonstrated in his analysis of Meso-American antiquities.²⁶ And just like monument-construction, so also court-sponsored military expeditions can serve as compensatory activities designed to strengthen the center in weakly-integrated political systems. Even the Chōla practice of appointing a *yuvaraja* was probably intended to create a degree of political stability and continuity which was not provided by any ongoing bureaucratic system, since royal power rested instead upon a network of highly personal loyalties and mutual obligations.²⁷ But while Rājarāja had managed, within the confining rules of this political game, to greatly enhance royal prestige, his son Rājendra never quite managed to escape from the incessant demands of the leadership role which he inherited, or to free himself from the compelling pressures generated by the structure and values—the “intrinsic logic”—of the political system. Rājarāja was the innovator; Rājendra became the spectacular but troubled emulator.

SUCH A LONG TRIP FOR WATER?

The military campaigns of Rājendra's day, then, constituted a compulsive continuation and wider extension of the pattern established under Rājarāja. We need not examine all of those campaigns, but one which deserves special comment is the longest

and most spectacular land expedition that Chōla armies ever undertook, into northern India as far as the Ganges. That project is both significant and relevant to our subject because it constitutes an important part of the background to the Chōla expedition into Southeast Asia. It shows the Chōla armies ranging farther and farther afield on ambitious raids whose epic character partook of an element of fantasy. A close look at the evidence for the Ganges expedition is especially useful because it suggests some of the credibility problems related to discussing such distant expeditions. Unlike the so-called Srivijaya campaign, the Ganges expedition is described in more than one epigraphical account, and those accounts differ in certain details. First, there is the version preserved in the Tamil *prasasti* :²⁸

[Rājendra took] Sakkarakōṭṭam whose warriors were brave; Maduramaṇḍalam which was swiftly destroyed; the thriving city of Nāmaṇaikkōṇam with its fruit-laden groves; Pañcappalli whose archers wielded savage bows; Māsuṇideśa with its green fields: a large hoard of family treasures [which he took] along with others after having captured Indraratha of the Lunar race and his family in a battle at Ādinagar [a city] of undying fame; Oḍḍa-viṣaya [Orissa] defended by thick forests; the good kōśalai-nāḍu where Brahmans gathered; Taṇḍabutti in whose gardens bees abounded, [captured] after Dharmapāla was destroyed in hot battle; Takkaṇalāḍam famed in all directions, [captured] after Raṇaśūra was attacked; Vangāla-dēśa [Bengal] where the rains never ceased and from whence Gōvindachandra fled after descending from his elephant; elephants of exceptional strength, women, and treasure [all of which he took] after having been pleased to put to flight in a heated contest strong Mahipāla by the sound of a deep-sea conch²⁹; Uttairalāḍam by the shore of the deep, pearl-yielding ocean; and the river Gangā whose waters strewn with fragrant flowers splashed against the places of sacred pilgrimage.

The description is by no means as straightforward and unproblematic as Nilakanta Sastri has suggested in *The Cōlas*. He not only gratuitously assumes that Madura-maṇḍalam was an

objective in that northern campaign and not the familiar Pāṇḍyan capital located in the opposite direction, but also that all of the places mentioned before Māśuṇidēśa were parts of that country, "contiguous to the Vēṅgī kingdom to the northwest of it."³⁰ Since there is a strong likelihood that in this account, as in other Chōḷa *prasaṣtis*, poetic liberties have resulted in a rather imaginative geography,³¹ we need not take this description too literally.

Still, the general course of the campaign seems clear. It was an expedition as far as Bengal and back, ostensibly—according to the account in the Tiruvāṅgāḍu plates, which also describe this campaign—to bring back sacred Ganges water with which to "sanctify" the kingdom. What is important in these descriptions is the series of place-names; the phrases which accompany them are largely rhetorical and have little descriptive value. Some, such as the characterization of Bengal as a place where the rains never ceased, seem to ring true, but that is precisely the sort of stereotyped information which we would expect to encounter in a eulogy to a king who is alleged to have conquered all of the exotic places in a certain direction. The crucial references are to the victories over the Pāla forces and the capture of Dandabhukti (Midnapur Dt.), northern and southern Radha, and Vanga (East Bengal). Although the Ganges is mentioned last, the Chōḷa forces would have had to cross and re-cross it during the course of the campaign in order to capture all of the places mentioned.

The Tiruvāṅgāḍu plates recount the same events more succinctly and in a slightly different order. As R. D. Banerji has observed, that version of the campaign makes little sense because it implies a criss-crossing of Bihar and Bengal in a pattern which defies natural terrain.³² On the other hand, the Tiruvāṅgāḍu plates preserve an interesting bit of information which was conveniently omitted from the lithic eulogy, viz. that Rājendra did not personally lead his army all the way to the Ganges, but met it on the banks of the Godavari river on its return.³³

As K. A. Nilakanta Sastri has acknowledged, this "conquest" could scarcely have been more than a hurried raid across a vast stretch of territory. The references to plunder, which appear to be incidental to the conquest of territory, undoubtedly constituted one of the principal objects of the raid. It is hard to take

seriously the assertion in the Tiruvāṅgāḍu plates that the ostensible purpose of the campaign was to bring back water from the sacred Ganges, especially when the Tamil *prasaṣti* makes no such claim. Still, the fact that Rājendra subsequently made much of the Ganges symbolism, calling himself the Chōḷa-who-conquered-the-Ganges (*Gaṅgaikoṇḍa-chōḷa*) and incorporating that phrase into the name of his new capital, shows that the pious motive was not merely invented after the event by court eulogists. Being able to claim the "conquest" of that sacred river was evidently important to Rājendra. Indeed, the symbolism of it must have been irresistible. Here, surely, was a major accomplishment which his father could not have claimed!

Little is known about the subsequent construction of Rājendra's new capital at Gaṅgaikoṇḍachōḷapuram or its impressive temple, although we know the claim was made that water from the Ganges—oddly described as a "liquid pillar of victory"—was poured into the sacred tank. Unlike Tanjāvūr, which is today a major urban center, the site of Gaṅgaikoṇḍachōḷapuram is today rather isolated. Indeed, it is tempting to suggest that it never did thrive, since there are so few references to it even in Rājendra's own inscriptions. Its remains today are marked by a most impressive temple and the ruins of an extensive water-control system, located in Udaiyarpalaiyam taluk, Tanjavur district. Why that particular spot was chosen may never be known, although Burton Stein has suggested some sort of defensive strategy, intended to protect the Kaveri delta from attack out of the north. But the fact that unlike Tanjāvūr, it did not prove to be a permanently viable settlement suggests that Rājendra's desire to replace his father's grand capital with one of his own creation—and an impressive temple to match—led to a project which was too hastily conceived. Here too, one senses a metaphor for Rājendra's career, full of grand deeds and dramatic gestures which proved to be ephemeral.

The Cholas in Sri Lanka

The Chōla experience in Sri Lanka vividly illustrates the processes and dilemmas inherent in Chōla imperial expansion: the importance of plunder to the initial incursion, the problems encountered when invasion led to prolonged occupation but not complete control of the island, and the long twilight period of combatting guerrilla resistance from unsubdued rebels before the decision was finally made—after the momentous accession of Kulōttuṅga I to the Chōla monarch in 1070—to cut further losses and withdraw to the mainland. Because of the presence of Chōla inscriptions in the northern part of the island and the explicit testimony of the *Cūḷavaṃsa* regarding the plundering propensities of the invading forces, we can assess not only the importance of this venture to the Chōla state but also its impact on local society and institutions. This evidence gives us a much clearer picture of what was going on in Sri Lanka than we have of the attack on Śrīvijaya that occurred during the same period, since in the latter case the local situation before, as well as after, the Chōla intrusion can be variously interpreted from the fragmentary evidence. But just as the Chōla conquest of Sri Lanka makes more sense when viewed against a background of conditions in southern India, so too the Chōla interest in Southeast Asia becomes clearer when viewed in relation to the Chōla commitment in Sri Lanka.

It should be emphasized that the following analysis of the Sri Lankan adventure, like the characterization of the Chōla state in the earlier chapters, is markedly different from the conventional wisdom on this subject. Previous authors have generally treated the Chōla presence in Sri Lanka as a problem in administrative

history. They have assumed that during the Chōlas' occupation of northern Sri Lanka, they "administered" that territory in a manner resembling their regime in India—here again the phantom Chōla "bureaucracy" intrudes—and those writers have therefore supposed that what needs to be studied is the structure of the administrative system, especially through identification of Chōla officials, analysis of the titles they possessed, and speculation on the nature of the departments they are assumed to have controlled.¹ In short, these assumptions are clearly related to preconceptions that have long governed the interpretations of south Indian states generally. But in addition, they appear to be related to a concern of Tamil scholars in both India and Sri Lanka to address modern communal issues; specifically, to demonstrate that in centuries past the Tamils have played a constructive role in the island's affairs. That misleading preoccupation has been excluded from the present discussion. Still, it is worth observing that an emphasis on the predatory aspects of Chōla military expansion in this period should not be construed as characteristic of Indian-Sri Lankan relations generally. The richly beneficial contributions of Indian social, religious, economic, and political traditions to Sri Lankan life over a period of many centuries are taken for granted in the following remarks. However they are not explicitly discussed, as they might conceivably be for the sake of providing "balance" simply because other scholars have already written about those contributions in some detail, and it would serve little purpose to repeat other discussions here.

It is also worth emphasizing that purely unofficial, cooperative social and commercial contacts between Tamil migrants to the island and its indigenous inhabitants, relationships of the kind that are ignored in the lurid and indignant accounts left by monastic chroniclers, certainly continued through the period of politico-military conflict with which we are concerned. That theme, too is taken for granted here. It is not any presumed one-sidedness of India's relationship with Sri Lanka, as either a benefactor or an exploiter of the island, but precisely the ambiguous and even paradoxical character of a relationship which was both beneficial and abrasive, that is so strikingly preserved in the historical record. Moreover, it is clear that the islanders were never merely passive

receipients of Indian initiatives; they too played active and sometimes aggressive roles.

SRI LANKA AND SOUTH INDIAN POLITICS

Although we are primarily concerned with the Chōla incursions of the tenth and eleventh centuries, we must view those activities against a background of earlier involvement by islanders and mainlanders in each other's political affairs. Even before the rise of the imperial Chōlas in the middle of the ninth century, the kings of Sri Lanka had maintained a loose alliance with the Pallava kings against the nearer and more threatening Pāṇḍyas. There was apparently some Indian colonization of northern Sri Lanka during the Pallava period as well, for the island's Chronicle refers to Tamil settlers in the early ninth century, and suggests that in time of crisis they would become a subversive element, ready to join the Pāṇḍyan invaders against the Sinhalese.² Just such a crisis developed during the reign of King Sena I (ca. 833–851), when the Pāṇḍyan forces of Śrī Mara Śrīvallabha landed on the island. Local Tamils joined the invaders to capture the capital, Anurādhapura, with results described in the Chronicle:

The Pandu King took away all valuables in the treasure house of the King and plundered what there was to plunder in vihāra and town. In the Ratnapāsāda the golden image of [the Buddha], the two jewels which had been set as eyes in the stone [image of the] Prince of Sages, likewise the gold plates on the cetiya in the Thūpārāma, and the golden images here and there in the vihāras—all these he took and deprived the Island of Laṅkā of her valuables, leaving the splendid town in a state as if it had been plundered by yakkhas.³

But the next king of Sri Lanka, Sena II (851–855), countered by invading the mainland and capturing the Pāṇḍyan capital at Madurai, with Pallava assistance, and deposing the Pāṇḍyan king in favor of his rebel son. The army captured much treasure, including some items that previously had been taken from the island.⁴ Thus, well before the Chōla invasions of the tenth and eleventh centuries, the island's kings had already become entangled in the dynastic politics and military conflicts of southern India, as both plunderers and plundered. Sri Lankan policy toward the mainland continued

to vacillate between fear of Indian neighbors when the latter were aggressive and the temptation to intervene in continental affairs when Indian states were disorganized and vulnerable.

The rise of the imperial Chōlas produced a diplomatic revolution in the island's relations with the mainland by drastically rearranging the configuration of dynastic power in southern India. As the emerging Chōla regime displaced that of the Pallavas and began to press southward from the Kaveri delta into the Pāṇḍyan domain, Sri Lankan kings, now deprived of the Pallava alliance, began to view the Chōlas as a greater threat than the Pāṇḍyas. The Pāṇḍyas would now require assistance just to sustain their position as rulers of a weakened buffer-state, for there were riches in the far south to attract Chōla interest. The Pāṇḍyas had access to the pearl-fisheries of the Gulf of Manar, while Sri Lanka had been renowned from early historic times as a source of precious stones. Both were attractive targets for Chōla appropriation.⁵ In the face of the Chōla threat, Sri Lankan-Pāṇḍyan enmity gave way to cooperation; in 915, troops from the island went to the aid of the Pāṇḍyan king Rājasimha II, only to share his disastrous defeat at the hands of the Chōla king Parāntaka I (907–953).⁶ Unable to recoup his losses, Rājasimha finally fled to Sri Lanka with his imperial regalia some time during the reign of Dappula IV (923–934) and sought refuge at Dappula's court. But Rājasimha apparently became a victim of the factional politics at the Anurādhapura court, because he abruptly left for Kerala, leaving his regalia behind.⁷

Yet the humiliation of Rājasimha did not mean total victory for the Chōlas; indeed, the incompleteness of their conquest of the Pāṇḍyan domain impelled them to undertake further adventures in northern Sri Lanka. According to the Chronicle, Parāntaka eventually sought to have himself crowned in order to confirm his conquest of the Pāṇḍya country, but was unable to do so in the proper fashion because of the absence of the Pāṇḍyan regalia. When the Sri Lankan king, Udaya IV (940–953), refused to surrender them, Parāntaka used this refusal as a pretext for launching a new invasion of the island, defeating Udaya's forces, and pillaging the countryside. But Udaya retreated southward with the Pāṇḍyan regalia into the wilds of Rohaṇa; and the frustrated Chōla forces had to depart without them. Although

the Chōla troops made off with other booty, the Chronicle claims that this plunder was subsequently recovered by a counter-expedition against the mainland.⁸

The problem of the regalia was merely symptomatic of a larger pacification problem encountered by the Chōlas in the far south. This territory was close enough to the Chōla heartland in the Kaveri delta to invite true territorial conquest but sufficiently distant to frustrate effective consolidation, given the rudimentary administrative apparatus at the disposal of the Chōla court. The pacification problem was also aggravated by the less advanced state of peasant colonization in the far south. This situation reflected the persistence of extensive forest tracts which could provide refuge to hostile chiefs and warriors, therefore constituting a serious problem of control. The Chōlas never subdued the Pāṇḍyan domain as fully as they had the Pallava kingdom. They were forced constantly to maintain garrisons in the south, often under the command of Chōla princes. The proximity of northern Sri Lanka as a refuge for defeated enemies and as a base for potential attack upon the mainland added to the insecurity of the Chōla empire's southern frontier, and this predicament must have provided further impetus to Chōla invasion plans. However, this problem ultimately proved to be insoluble, for it was open-ended: The Chōlas wound up facing a challenge similar to that created by the Pāṇḍyan environment when they attempted to occupy northern Sri Lanka and then had to contend with continued turbulence in the southern part of the island.

Up to mid-tenth century, south-Indian military expeditions to Sri Lanka had been brief, ad hoc affairs, designed to facilitate short-term gains with minimal involvement and followed by withdrawal to the mainland. But in the reigns of Rājārāja I and Rājendra I, the more ambitious efforts which had manifested themselves in the mainland were also reflected in new initiatives in Sri Lanka, based upon more ruthless plunder of major political and religious centers in the north, followed by the establishment of durable, fortified encampments from which wide-ranging raids could be carried out in other parts of the island. The period of Chōla entrenchment in northern Sri Lanka lasted about three-quarters of a century, from roughly 993, the date of Rājārāja's

first invasion, to 1070, when Vijayabāhu I recaptured the north and expelled the Chōla forces.⁹

As so often happened in Indian states, so too at the Anurādhapura court internal problems encouraged Rājārāja's invasion. The king, Mahinda V (ca. 981-1017), was distracted by a revolt of his own Indian mercenary troops, forces that were difficult to control even in the best of times. Sri Lankan kings had gradually come to rely heavily upon these mercenaries, rather than upon indigenous Sinhalese troops, who apparently were not sufficiently aggressive.¹⁰ The Indian mercenaries were referred to, according to their region of origin in southern India, as Damiḷas, Kēraḷas, or Karnāṭas. The troops from Malabar seem to have been a particularly turbulent element within the army. Yet civil wars and factional struggles in Sri Lanka had gradually increased royal dependence upon Indian mercenaries. Back in the seventh century, an unfortunate precedent had been established: Defeated Sinhalese leaders would flee to India and return with Indian troops to resume the fight, thus injecting more and more of these opportunistic forces into the island's political affairs.¹¹ King Aggabodhi III, dethroned by the rebel Jeṭṭhatissa, even managed to regain his throne with the assistance of Tamil mercenaries.¹²

Greater reliance upon mercenaries naturally aggravated the problem of providing sufficient pay or plunder to sustain the army. Although the kings of Sri Lanka claimed sovereignty over the entire island, their region of effective control was confined to the northern heartland, known as Rājaraṭṭha or King's Domain, a lowland dry-zone where the populace was sustained by an intricate system of tank irrigation. Only a tentative and vacillating suzerainty was exercised over the less-developed southern and west-central regions, known respectively as Rohaṇa and Dakkhinaḍesa, the latter conventionally regarded as the domain of the heir-apparent.¹³ The lack of prosperous "enemy" territories to plunder in other parts of Sri Lanka, plus the obvious logistical difficulties associated with carrying on campaigns in India, no doubt rendered the problem of controlling the military forces particularly acute. In times of internal crisis—and there was seldom a dearth of rival claimants to the throne—Anurādhapura itself could be threatened by unruly mercenaries. The civil war fought between Aggabodhi III and Dāṭṭhapatissa I, a conflict in

which mercenaries played a leading role, had resulted in the plunder of royal and monastic treasures in Anurādhapura, as well as the burning of the royal palace and the Relic Temple.¹⁴



Figure 3 : Eleventh Century Sri Lanka.

The army could be controlled only by a vigorous king; Mahinda V lacked the necessary skill. The Buddhist chroniclers,¹⁵ with characteristic emphasis on moral deficiencies, later blamed the king for the ensuing Chōla invasion :

As [Mahinda] wandered from the path of statecraft and was of very weak character, the peasants did not deliver to him his share of the produce. As the prince in his tenth year had entirely lost his fortune, he was unable to satisfy his troops by giving them their pay. All the Kērajas who got no pay planted themselves with one another at the door of the royal palace, determined upon force, bow in hand, armed with swords and [other] weapons, [with the cry] "So long as no pay is given to us he shall not eat !" But the king duped them. Taking with him all his portable goods he escaped by an underground passage and departed in haste to Rohaṇa.¹⁶

The Chronicle then observes that the Chōla king, who is not named but was almost certainly Rājaraṇa I, decided to invade the island when he learned of this internal strife from a merchant.¹⁷ An interesting causal sequence is suggested by this account of political upheaval followed by invasion. Because the king was "weak," he lost the allegiance and hence the revenues of the villages, a problem which in turn led to a revolt of the mercenary troops and created an opportunity for Chōla intervention. This explanation, which emerges directly from the Chronicle's own version of events, also implies that the Sinhalese kings faced many of the same problems that beset the Chōlas, particularly the fact that the inheritance of an inflated military apparatus by a weak king could lead to disaster by encouraging challenges to royal authority from both within and without.

Rājaraṇa's inscriptions provide no details of his invasion beyond the generalized claim of conquest. The *Cūḷavaṃsa*, however, complains that the capital at Anurādhapura was "utterly destroyed in every way by the Chōla army."¹⁸ The fact that the Chronicle was compiled by Buddhist monks, precisely the group most adversely affected by the Chōla plunder of Anurādhapura—apart from the royal court itself—explains why the Chronicle catalogues Chōla outrages in such detail. Although the fact that the great monastic centers there were Buddhist rather than Hindu

may have eased any qualms that the Tamils might have had about plundering them, the conflict was not primarily religious, but economic. The great *viḥāras* of Anurādhapura simply happened to be conspicuously prosperous and hence institutionally vulnerable. The impressive size and complexity of the major monastic centers must have made them particularly tempting as objects of plunder.¹⁹ Although ostensibly aloof from worldly entanglements, the Buddhist Sangha had proven highly successful in securing the gifts and endowments needed to sustain the Order, especially in Anurādhapura, where its possession of holy relics as symbols of sacred and secular legitimacy gave it a close and symbiotic relationship with the court. At the great *viḥāras* in the capital, hundreds of monks were supported by the resources of assigned villages, by gifts from kings and nobles, and by the labor of resident "servants," including slaves.²⁰ Rulers commonly assigned laborers to *viḥāras*, along with the revenues of specified villages to support them.²¹ The workers had overseers, and the entire monastic complex had its superintendents. The *viḥāras* at Anurādhapura thus represented a sophisticated level of institutional complexity and resource-concentration. As Wilhelm Geiger has observed, "monks living in one of the wealthy *viḥāras* were not at all in indigent circumstances."²² Anurādhapura was thus doubly vulnerable to Chōḷa plunder—first, as a political center, with its royal treasury; secondly, as a great monastic center, with an accumulation of religious treasures and other resources.

Not even sacred relics proved to be immune to Chōḷa depredation. At each *viḥāra* was a large *thūpa* (i.e., *stūpa*), a huge burial-mound constructed over a central relic chamber. At the Mahāvihāra, the Mahāthūpa, the greatest of these structures, was reputed to have been built in the first century B. C. by King Duṭṭhagāmaṇi. The colorful story of its construction and the enshrining of its relics comprises no fewer than three full chapters (29–31) of the *Mahavaṃsa*. Not only did the Chōḷa forces decimate the *viḥāras* of Anurādhapura, they also tore apart the massive *thūpas* in a search for treasures in the relic chambers.

The Chōḷas seized the Mahesī, the jewels, the diadem that the King had inherited, the whole of the [royal] ornaments, the priceless diamond bracelet, a gift of the gods, the unbreakable sword and the relic of the torn

strip of cloth. But the Ruler himself, who had fled in fear to the jungle, they captured alive, with the pretense of making a treaty. Thereupon they sent the Monarch and all the treasures which had fallen into their hands at once to the Chōḷa monarch. In the three fraternities and in all Laṅkā [breaking open] the relic chambers, [they carried away] many costly images of gold, etc., and while they violently destroyed here and there all the monasteries, like blood-sucking *yakkhas* they took all the treasures of Laṅkā for themselves.²³

Even if we allow for the exaggeration of the chroniclers, it is clear that the Chōḷas devastated the city. Partly as a result of this devastation, Anurādhapura now lost its political preeminence to Polonnaruva,²⁴ which had briefly served as a royal residence in earlier times and was now commandeered by the Chōḷas as their principal settlement.²⁵ This move proved to be no temporary change. When the Chōḷas were finally driven from the island around 1070, the Sri Lankan kings continued to rule from Polonnaruva instead of returning to their former capital. Ironically, the new site provided more protection against Indian invaders from the west, as well as closer proximity to the unruly province of Rohaṇa.

In spite of the thorough plundering of Anurādhapura, the Chōḷas do not appear to have tried to disrupt the intricate irrigation system of Rājaraṭṭha; or at least the Chronicle, which repeatedly boasts of the construction projects of the hero-kings of Sri Lanka and surely would have condemned Chōḷa destruction of them, conspicuously omits this accusation. On the other hand, the Chōḷas probably lacked the motivation to mobilize local corvée labor in order to maintain properly the major works in this system, for we know from the Chronicle that Vijayabāhu I, after the expulsion of the Chōḷas from the island, undertook extensive repair and construction projects. But there is no reason to regard these activities as different from those massive repair projects, so often praised in the Chronicle, which other kings undertook periodically in order to stem the ravages of natural decay. Serious deterioration of the irrigation system of Rājaraṭṭha, even from natural causes, could certainly have hastened the Chōḷas' ultimate departure from the island, but without additional evidence beyond the fact of

subsequent repairs, we can only note this as a possibility. The fact that the Sri Lankan monarchy was able to reestablish itself in Rājaraṭṭha, a region that was not drastically depopulated and utterly abandoned by the royal court until after the disastrous wars of the thirteenth century, clearly indicates that the impact of the Chōla occupation upon the rural scene was far less cataclysmic than its effect on Anurādhapura.

MERCHANTS AND MERCENARIES

At this point we must pause to consider another factor—that is, in addition to a desire for plunder, a need to keep profitably employed the troops that had enlisted in the Chōla military enterprise, and a utilization of an “offensive defense” to protect the Chōla sphere of hegemony in southern India—that is sometimes adduced to explain the Chōla presence in Sri Lanka and, more briefly, in Southeast Asia. Because the island had for centuries occupied a key position in the great Arabia-to-China trade arc, it has been inferred that the Chōlas wished to gain complete control over that maritime trade for themselves.²⁶ The difficulty with this commercial thesis is that there is no evidence to indicate that the Chōla court ever engaged directly in either domestic or maritime commerce, which was—above the level of mere petty trade—largely in the hands of well-organized alliances of merchant and artisan groups. Indeed, the trade-monopoly thesis raises a number of troublesome questions about the relationship between kings and merchants, questions about the structure of India's external trade to which the advocates of the trade-control thesis have not addressed themselves. In any case, it would be wholly implausible to suggest that the court intended to assume directly the burden of carrying on foreign trade at the expense of both foreign and indigenous merchant groups.

But what about the possibility that the court, though not itself directly involved in commerce, may have acted to protect or advance interests of Indian merchants? Some scholars have suggested that, like the European chartered companies of a later age, the Indian merchant “corporations” involved their home governments, willingly or otherwise, in imperial adventures abroad.²⁷ This is an interesting thesis, but we should be careful to avoid reading history backwards by invoking inappropriate

analogies with modern colonialism. In order to understand the peculiarities of the Indian situation, we must take into account the ambiguous relationship between Indian merchants and the major south Indian dynastic powers.

The Chōla period witnessed the flourishing of complex, interlocking networks of regional and long-distance trade. The merchant alliances that dominated it exercised a wide variety of mercantile skills, including a talent for “urban” self-government in certain marketing centers, a habit of maintaining armed troops to protect their caravans and settlements, and—for some of them—a willingness to travel across the seas in pursuit of trade. The functioning of such networks, which necessarily cut across many imperial and chiefly domains, depended upon the widespread acceptance of the political neutrality of trade; it is for this reason that kings commonly confined their roles in this commerce to taxation and regulation, and frequently issued charters guaranteeing certain rights and privileges to specified trade-centers. Far from being the “creatures” of any particular dynastic regime, the itinerant merchants exercised a chameleon-like ability to adapt themselves to local regimes to suit their own convenience. In a loosely integrated political system like the Chōla dynastic state, it was inevitable that merchant-artisan alliances, like other communities and institutions, should have existed in balanced but cautious cooperation with the royal court. It was not until the subsequent Vijayanagar period, with its intensified mobilization of warrior power, that the prerogatives of merchant alliances were systematically curbed.²⁸

However, the neutrality of commerce in the Chōla period had its limitations; both the information and the resources which merchant groups had at their disposal were of potential utility to royal courts. Mercantile regiments were sometimes used to supplement royal armies (the best-documented evidence of this discussed below, is from Sri Lanka after the Chōla occupation) and were thereupon required to undertake rigorous oaths of allegiance to ensure their loyalty, which, like that of other mercenary groups, was not wholly reliable. A more general form of assistance consisted of information—or what we would today call “intelligence”—about distant lands, ports, courts, and wealth. Thus, according to the Chronicle, Rājaraṭṭha's invasion of the island

was precipitated by news brought by a horse-trader. Whether this statement is literally true or not is irrelevant. What is important is that the authors of the Chronicle regarded it as reasonable for the Chōla court to obtain such information from merchants. Chōla kings also appear to have encouraged maritime commerce through ports they controlled, perhaps in expectation of collecting additional port duties. But it was scarcely necessary to exclude foreign merchants from this trade in order to enjoy such profits. Far from securing a trade monopoly for Indian merchants, Chōla kings welcomed foreign ones.

What of the evidence from Sri Lanka? Here we see that Indian merchants did extend their commercial—and related military—activities across northern Sri Lanka in the wake of the Chōla incursions of the late tenth and the eleventh centuries, although some commercial expansion there appears to have taken place even earlier.²⁹ Up to the eve of Chōla invasion under Rājaraṇja, Sri Lanka's internal trade, at least, had been largely in the hands of indigenous merchants, especially the *vaṇigrāmayan* associations, which in both name and function were similar to the Tamil *maṇigrāmam* merchants. They dominated certain market towns and were granted by the kings of Sri Lanka special charters that authorized weight standardization and guaranteed freedom from unauthorized confiscations, taxes, searches, and punishments. But in spite of these (perhaps imitative) parallels with Indian merchant groups, there is evidence of some hostility toward Tamils on the part of the Sinhalese merchants. The remarkable Badulla record, which specifies various rights and privileges guaranteed to that northern market town in the mid-tenth century, observes that "if a lord who has accepted favors of the Tamils were to arrive in this settlement, he shall not be permitted to enter."³⁰ The precise implication of that statement, whether political or commercial, is not entirely clear, but since the record dates from a period prior to the invasion of Rājaraṇja I, this statement cannot refer to local nobles cooperating with Rājaraṇja's forces. S. Paranavitana has interpreted the statement politically, suggesting that it refers to the brief incursion of Parāntaka I.³¹ Whatever the import, the remark implies a genuine fear of the Tamils based upon some perceived military and/or commercial threat. Other epigraphical evidence suggests that Indian merchant alliances such as the

Aiñṇurruvar and Vaṇanjiyar did subsequently displace the Sinhalese groups, at least along the principal trading routes of northern Sri Lanka during the period of Chōla dominance. The Chōla occupation unquestionably created favorable conditions for these gains, but it would be rash to conclude that the invasion was undertaken specifically to assist merchants in that fashion.

The most significant aspect of Indian merchant involvement in medieval Sri Lanka, but also the most difficult to assess, is military. Did the Chōla army in Sri Lanka rely heavily upon mercenary troops provided by Indian merchant groups? Before attempting to answer that question, we should note that even if that were true, this form of support for Chōla military expansion could be viewed as a "commercial impulse" to empire only in a very narrow sense. It would have had no necessary connection with any commercial-monopoly strategy, since the primary aim would have been to obtain a share in the profits of conquest, the same motive that prompted other Chōla allies to participate.

But did merchant-affiliated troops really join the Chōla forces in Sri Lanka? The highly generalized claims of Chōla inscriptions do not help us very much on this point; the evidence is indirect. We do know that after the expulsion of the Chōlas, bodies of Tamil mercenaries, calling themselves *Vēlaikkārar* troops and identifying themselves as servants of the Aiñṇurruvar, Vaṇanjiyar, or Nānādeśi merchants, were employed by kings of Sri Lanka. Furthermore, these troops, according to their own statements, were drawn from both the "right" (*valaṅgai*) and "left" (*iḍaṅgai*) blocs of non-Brahman castes in southern India.³² Remarkably, Vijayabāhu I used them to guard the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Polonnaruwa.³³ But the Chronicle also testifies that the Indian mercenaries employed by Vijayabāhu balked at being asked to serve on expeditions to India and were forcibly subdued, with some difficulty, by Sinhalese troops.³⁴ Parakkamabāhu I, who ruled in the last half of the twelfth century, also made extensive use of Indian troops. It is tempting to suggest that these practices were adopted in imitation of the Chōlas, but the evidence is not sufficient. It is certainly true that the Chōlas commonly employed many so-called *Vēlaikkāra* regiments, but it would be a mistake to assume that all such troops were provided by merchant associations, for such was clearly not the case.

All we can reasonably say is that Indian merchant alliances did expand their commercial activities in the northern part of Sri Lanka in the wake of the Chōla incursions, and that they brought their troops with them—certainly to protect their commerce, but possibly also to serve with Chōla forces on an ad hoc basis. After the expulsion of the Chōlas, around 1070, the kings of Sri Lanka did employ such mercantile troops; however, as with the earlier Indian mercenaries, the results were mixed. In any case, as K. Indrapala has noted, the earlier references to Indian mercenaries in the Chronicle suggest that their employers in Sri Lanka, whether kings or rebels, had to send to India for them, whereas from the time of Vijayabāhu I. when the term *Velaiikkāra* begins to appear in the inscriptions of Sri Lanka, there are no further references to sending abroad for mercenaries, a silence which suggests that Indian mercenaries could now be recruited locally.³⁶

CONSOLIDATION AND EROSION

The initial season of plunder had been followed by a partial consolidation of Chōla power in Rājaraṭṭha. Śaivite temples were constructed in Polonnaruva and in the emporium of Mahātiṭṭha, projects that reflect an intention to transform military encampments into more permanent enclaves.³⁶ There was some effort to institute taxation, especially on merchants and artisans, but our slender epigraphical evidence relates solely to urban tolls imposed upon traders plying main highways as well as upon spinners and weavers in towns.³⁷ Of rural taxation or tribute we have no details, but the fact that such levies were imposed and probably paid, at least in part, during the years when the Chōlas were strong in the north, may be inferred from the Chronicle's testimony that when the Chōlas were in disarray, during the third quarter of the century, the people of Rājaraṭṭha were no longer willing to pay.³⁸

One part of the island where Chōla influence appears to have been particularly strong was the port of Trincomalee (Tirukōnamalai) and environs. Thanks to the persistent efforts of scholars at the University of Sri Lanka in Peradeniya, especially K. Indrapala and S. Gunasingam, to locate Tamil inscriptions in that locality, records from the period of Chōla occupation and later

are continually being located, studied, and published.³⁹ The records from that region include a fragmentary inscription from the reign of Rājaraṭṭha I that constitutes the earliest Chōla record yet discovered in Sri Lanka.⁴⁰ It is now apparent that Trincomalee was a more important center of Chōla activity than scholars had previously believed—perhaps, as S. Gunasingam suggests, more important to the Chōlas than any other part of the island. Of course, the very fact that a special effort has been made to locate Tamil inscriptions in that region can easily give us the wrong impression of its relative importance in the Chōla period. Still, these records from Trincomalee carry implications, however indirectly, of Chōla interest in Southeast Asia as well as in Sri Lanka. Although all of the surviving inscriptions relate to land-based activities alone, such as endowments to the illustrious Kōṇēśvaram temple or provisions for a *brahmadēya* called Rājaraṭṭha-chaturvēdimangalam, the clustering of these records around one of the island's best harbors, situated on its northeastern coast, underscores the maritime context of the Chōla conquest and suggests the readiness of its most ambitious rulers to pursue their interests eastward along the main routes of seaborne trade.

We find among the recently-discovered records from Trincomalee some intriguingly ambiguous references to an official who styled himself Chōla Ilankēśvara Dēva, possibly a Chōla prince sent to govern Sri Lanka by Rājendra I, although there is some scholarly disagreement about the reign, since the official's records were dated in his own years rather than those of the king and the astrological details allow for more than one corresponding year.⁴¹ Minimally, his records imply considerable delegation of royal authority, at least in the Trincomalee area, during part of the Chōla occupation, and perhaps a determination to enhance Chōla control. But it would be rash to view them as *prima facie* evidence for the effective integration of Sri Lanka into an effectively centralized Chōla empire or for the extension to the island of any sophisticated machinery of Chōla administration. Vice-royalties by Chōla princes, after all, were also a common practice in the Pāṇḍya country, where—as we have already noted—Chōla control was tenuous at best.

Although precise details regarding the exercise of Chōla authority in Rājaraṭṭha are lacking, the fact of continuing military

activity is clear enough. Under Rājendra I, Chōla raids were launched southward into Rohaṇa. By his fifth year, Rājendra claimed to have completely conquered the island, a claim that has led some historians to assert that he "completed" the conquest that Rājarāja had begun. But the Chōlas never really consolidated their control over the south, which in any case lacked large and prosperous settlements to tempt long-term Chōla occupation. Thus it appears that under Rājendra, Chōla predatory expansion in the island began to reach a point of diminishing returns. Was that a primary motive for further eastward expansion, into Southeast Asia?

Ironically, the Chōla settlements in the north themselves eventually became targets of attack, partly because forces of the Sinhalese "enemy"—remnants of the royal court and some chiefs who rallied to its cause—were now more dispersed than the Chōlas were and capable of organizing guerrilla resistance. Since members of the royal house were natural rallying-points for counterattacks, the Chōlas were anxious to seize them. The *Cūlavamsa* admits that Rājendra's forces captured King Mahinda and transported him to India, where he eventually died in exile.⁴² But Prince Kassapa, son of Mahinda, hid in Rohaṇa, where Chōla forces vainly searched for him. Kassapa assumed the title of Vikkamabāhu I and "ruled" in Rohaṇa for several years (ca. 1029—41)⁴³ while attempting to organize a campaign of liberation and unification. But Vikkamabāhu died before he could consolidate his power, and a series of ephemeral aspirants to the throne subsequently appeared and disappeared in Rohaṇa without dislodging the Chōlas from the north.

Some time in the mid-eleventh century there arose in Rohaṇa an ambitious Sinhalese prince named Kittī, the future Vijayabāhu I (1059—1114). He was descended, or at least claimed to be descended, from the royal house.⁴⁴ By the age of seventeen, he had defeated his most powerful rivals in Rohaṇa and was anxious to take on the Chōlas. Once again, the Chōlas faced the task of dealing with an aggressive but elusive foe. In attempting to subjugate southern Sri Lanka from strongholds in the north, the Chōlas had to contend with the same problem that had proven so frustrating to Sri Lankan kings, namely trying to control a country of scattered, turbulent chiefs and intractable rebels whose

allegiance, if they gave it, was at best opportunistic. But Vijayabāhu, from his base in Rohaṇa, faced a similar difficulty; he had to contend with the hostility of local chiefs who regarded him as a greater threat to their independence than the Chōlas were.⁴⁵ For that reason, the Chōlas occasionally succeeded in recruiting nominal support from rebel chiefs in Rohaṇa, so that Vijayabāhu had difficulty consolidating a firm territorial base from which to launch a decisive campaign into the north. On the other hand, the Chōlas were unable to eliminate similar opposition to themselves in the north. Gradually the north-south conflict developed into a prolonged, indecisive struggle of raids and counter-raids, with the forces of Vijayabāhu advancing upon Polonnaruva and then falling back to fortresses in Dakkhinadēsa and Rohaṇa to withstand retaliatory Chōla attacks and sieges.

But time was on the side of the insurgent forces, and gradually Chōla determination began to falter. Even without a unified "national" force behind him, Vijayabāhu possessed strategic advantages, and a prolonged war of attrition was of greater benefit to him than to the Chōlas. After the accession of Virarājendra (c. 1063—69) to the Chola throne, the Chōlas were increasingly on the defensive, not only in Sri Lanka but also in peninsular India, where they were hard-pressed by the attacks of the Chālukyas from their heartland in the Deccan. When Vijayabāhu finally established a firm base in southern Sri Lanka, he launched a successful, two-pronged attack on Anurādhapura and Polonnaruva. Anurādhapura fell quickly; Polonnaruva was captured after a prolonged siege of the isolated Chōla forces. In order to stave off total defeat, Virarājendra was forced to dispatch an expedition from the mainland to recapture the settlements in the north and carry the attack back into Rohaṇa. What had begun as a profitable occupation was now deteriorating into desperate attempts to retain a foothold on the island.

Although it would be more dramatic to depict Vijayabāhu finally driving the Chōlas into the sea, the occupation actually ended in Chōla withdrawal after a further series of indecisive clashes. If the flood-tide of Chōla expansion during the reigns of Rājarāja I and Rājendra I had been sustained by vigorous royal leadership at home and political disorganization among the Chōlas' dynastic rivals, the ebb-tide was occasioned by the reverse.

namely disturbances at home accompanied by the challenges of vigorous leaders in the enemy camp. Thus, when the Chālukya-Chōla prince Kulōttuṅga I came to the Chōla throne in 1070, after a period of political crisis at the Chōla court, he initially concentrated on consolidating his authority in India. The adventure in Sri Lanka, which had been associated with his three immediate predecessors (Rājādhirāja, Rājendra II, and Virarājendra—all sons of Rājendra I), no longer seemed to be worthwhile, and he had less personal prestige involved in it. So he simply terminated the Chōla commitment there instead of trying to recoup previous losses.

That was by no means the end of the Sri Lankan problem, however. The Chōlas had forestalled raids against the mainland during that occupation, but that form of harassment resumed in the last quarter of the eleventh century, following Chōla withdrawal from the island. The Pāṇḍyan country had never been fully subdued by the Chōlas, and renewed interference by the islanders in Pāṇḍyan politics further eroded the Chōla hold on the Pāṇḍyan country.⁴⁶ Although Kulōttuṅga I was an aggressive monarch, he was preoccupied with affairs in the north, particularly in Vengi, where he had previously reigned as the Eastern Chālukya prince Rājendra II. Indeed, he felt it necessary to direct preemptive military attacks against Kalinga (Orissa), far to the north, in order to prevent Kalingan invasions of Vengi, just as earlier Chōla kings had been drawn into Sri Lanka partly in order to secure control of the Pāṇḍyan country—in both cases, with little ultimate success.⁴⁷

In their Sri Lankan adventure we see most clearly, then, that the dynamism and direction of Chōla imperial expansion was dependent upon the subtle interplay of internal factors. Among the internal or "push" factors, the compulsion to seek new sources of portable wealth was of primary importance. Closely related to that motive was the need to provide an integrative activity that would mobilize the military capacities of subordinate chiefs and keep them occupied with profitable expeditions. Therefore, a lack of fully coercive royal power over those chiefs was not an obstacle to military expansion—indeed, it was one of the reasons for that expansion—as long as vigorous royal leadership was available, to provide an organizing authority and sustain momentum. That momentum was maintained well into the reign of Rājendra, I, for

the initial Chōla successes in Sri Lanka were evidently followed by the even more ambitious naval expedition into Southeast Asia around 1025 A.D.

External or "Pull" factors were both economic and strategic. Long distance raiding was not merely profitable; it also provided, if only momentarily, some measure of protection to the Chōla heartland by forcing rival kings into a defensive posture. But where, as in northern Sri Lanka, rapid exhaustion of the richest sources of plunder led to an attempt to establish a rudimentary tribute/tax system in the north while undertaking occasional forays into more distant territories, the Chōlas ran the risk of increasing their own vulnerability and ultimately expending more resources than they gained. As their involvement in the island became increasingly troublesome, they were finally forced to withdraw. In the reign of Kulōttuṅga I, the island faded from Chōla consciousness as a major source of profit, but not as a source of trouble.

Contacts Between India and Southeast Asia : Prehistoric and Early Historic Evidence

In the 1960s, when I first turned my attention to the subject of Chōla relations with Śrīvijaya, I found it necessary to examine Chōla imperial expansion in the wider context of Indian commercial and cultural expansion into Southeast Asia during a millennium of prior contacts of a largely peaceful character. The premise of that approach was that the contrast between the early period of amicable relations and the later period of belligerence was related to other changes in the ties of interdependence between southern India and Southeast Asia, including the waning of Buddhism as a common idiom of cultural discourse. Although my present inclination is to place more emphasis on economic developments than on cultural trends, an appreciation of the general development of maritime contacts of all kinds between India and Southeast Asia still seems essential to a proper assessment of Rājendra's naval expedition, lest that event appear to be merely a dramatic or bizarre episode, isolated from other trends of that period. So in this chapter I shall greatly expand both the geographical and chronological scope of our inquiry in order to examine the relations among southern Asia's maritime peoples during the centuries prior to the overseas expansion of Chōla power. In the following chapter, I shall focus on the state of Śrīvijaya in particular.

In light of the radically new theories about Southeast Asian prehistory which have been advocated by some archaeologists in recent years, it is appropriate to begin our discussion much farther back in time than most historians, including myself, have been accustomed to start when discussing "Indianization"—that is, not

with the early centuries of the Christian era, when Indianized kingdoms of Southeast Asia first appear in the historical record, beginning with Chinese accounts, but earlier still, during the prehistoric millennia for which archaeological artifacts and some linguistic evidence alone constitute the relevant data, except perhaps for geological evidence relating to changing sea levels and coastlines. Archaeological discoveries made during roughly the last three decades in various parts of Southeast Asia, particularly on the mainland, have sharply challenged the view, long held by both western and Indian historians, of the early peoples of Southeast Asia as receptive to outside influences but politically, socially, and technologically backward and requiring a lengthy period of foreign tutelage by India and, to a lesser extent, China before state systems of a higher order of complexity than a mere chiefdom, the rise of stable elite groups, and indeed "civilized" life in the ordinary sense of that word became possible.

The conventional interpretation of early Southeast Asia, which views the local peoples as either passive recipients or, at best, active and enthusiastic borrowers of more "advanced" culture and technology, has now been confronted by a series of counter-claims, especially those advanced by archaeologist Wilhelm G. Solheim II and his supporters. They theorize that Southeast Asians may in fact have been the very first Asians to grind and polish stone tools, plant rice, make pottery, and cast bronze. Instead of having borrowed these techniques from other parts of the world, it is argued, Southeast Asians may well have originated and exported them. Thus, for example, Solheim hypothesizes that the first neolithic culture of north China, known to archaeologists as the Yangshao, developed out of the so-called Hoabinhian subculture of Southeast Asia (named for the village of Hoa Binh in northern Vietnam, near which some of its characteristic artifacts have been found), which he believes spread northward into north China some time around the sixth or seventh millennium B.C.¹ By advancing arguments of this kind, the revisionists seek to demonstrate that the prehistoric cultures of Southeast Asia were not as primitive, nor the historic cultures as derivative, as scholars have generally believed.

While it can scarcely be claimed, even by its most zealous advocates, that the revisionist perspective has completely displaced

the more traditional point of view—nor *should* it do so, I might add, since in its most extreme form it merely negates the conventional wisdom by substituting for the older Indo- and Sino-centric approaches a Southeast Asia-centric view which is equally simplistic—those revisionist theories nevertheless deserve our respectful attention because they force us to rethink many assumptions, some of them merely implicit, which underlie conventional theories about Indianization. Minimally, they force us to recognize that the process of change for which the label “Indianization” constitutes a kind of conceptual shorthand was a far more complex development, and the local peoples who were subjected to it far less primitive and unsophisticated, than had previously been supposed.

In addition, it suggests that what foreign (not only western, but also Indian) scholars have written about the “civilizing” influence of Indian and Chinese culture on supposedly less advanced peoples has been strongly colored—and in the case of Indian historians like R. C. Majumdar, ironically so—by European colonial attitudes, since discussions of Indian “colonization” and “Greater India” are in fact remarkably similar in tone to the tracts in which British authors once described Britain’s alleged “civilizing” mission in India. The task of re-examining conventional theories of Indianization is therefore not an easy one, since it requires of us a recognition and reassessment of our unstated values and assumptions, particularly of what Solheim calls the “unconscious predisposition” of European and European-oriented writers to regard the historic cultures of early Southeast Asia as derivative in nature.

RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES

Recent discoveries in Southeast Asia have been revolutionary in their implications partly because so little systematic excavation had been done prior to the 1950s. Much more attention had been paid, especially by colonial administrators and other amateurs who undertook the study of Southeast Asia’s ancient past, to the preservation and study of readily accessible monuments and inscriptions than to the careful excavation of buried artifacts. Many of the artifacts which did come to light were either surface finds or else objects which had been dug up with no attention paid

to stratification and context, considerations now regarded as essential to scientific archaeology. The result, according to Solheim, was that not a single site report acceptable under present scholarly standards was published before the 1950s. All of the properly reported excavations have been undertaken since then.

Among the recent excavations which have generated new theories, those undertaken in Thailand have been particularly revealing. Two sites in particular have attracted considerable attention. (See Figure 4.) During the mid-1960s, Solheim and his colleagues

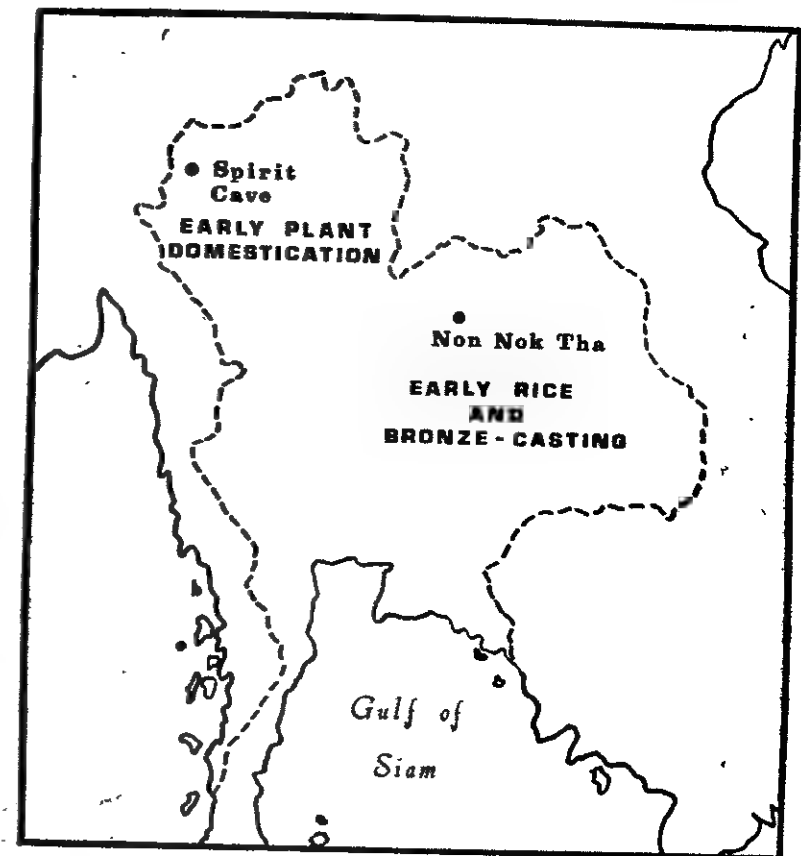


Figure 4: Sites of Some Important Archaeological Discoveries in Northern Thailand

undertook archaeological salvage work in areas about to be flooded by new dams on the Mekong river and its tributaries. Among several sites excavated in this connection was Non Nok Tha, in northeastern Thailand, at a spot where a mound rises a few feet above the surrounding rice fields. In that excavation, a husk of rice was found imprinted on a piece of broken pottery that was known, because of radiocarbon dating of a burial at a level above the potsherd, to date from 3500 B. C. or earlier. That date is a thousand years earlier than rice has hitherto been dated for either India or China. Is it possible that rice cultivation in Southeast Asia predates that of India and China? Also found were a bronze axe and double axe—molds of sandstone, which can be radiocarbon dated from associated charcoal to a period earlier than 2300 B. C., probably before 3000 B.C. "This," observes Solheim, "is more than 500 years earlier than the first known bronze casting in India, and 1000 years before any known in China. It may also prove older than sites in the Near East, which is where bronze manufacture was long assumed to have begun."²

In 1965 Solheim's associate Chester Gorman, who had first suggested digging at Non Nok Tha, explored the far northern part of Thailand, near the Burma border, searching for evidence of early plant domestication. He was testing a hypothesis, proposed in 1952 on theoretical grounds by geographer Carl Sauer, that the earliest plant domestication in the world might have taken place in Southeast Asia. Sauer had theorized that such domestication would have been associated, not with the bronze age Dongson culture, but with the earlier (neolithic) and supposedly more primitive Hoabinhian culture.

Gorman found the evidence he was looking for in Spirit Cave, located high on a limestone outcrop above a tributary of the Salween river of Burma. By excavating the cave floor, Gorman discovered carbonized plant remains, including those of beans, a pea, a water chestnut, a pepper, and bits of bottle gourd and cucumber, all in association with typical Hoabinhian artifacts. A series of carbon-14 dates indicated that the plant remains date to 10,000 B. C. or earlier. Gorman inferred, in part from the large size of the seeds, that they were the products of early horticulture, although that inference has been questioned by some scholars. A stone adze was found in a layer dating from 7000 B.C.,

predating by millennia any such sophisticated neolithic implements yet found in north China.³ Finds such as these have challenged the accepted prehistoric chronologies.

THE PATTERN OF PREHISTORIC DEVELOPMENT : SOLHEIM'S VIEW

Although the discoveries in northern Thailand are particularly dramatic, they are by no means the only evidence available, even from Thailand, for rewriting Southeast Asian prehistory. Relying upon a wide range of such evidence—and some rather free speculation—Solheim has produced a hypothetical picture of the development of prehistoric Southeast Asia which, briefly described, looks roughly like this: The first humans to appear in Southeast Asia, more than two million years ago, were probably hunters and gatherers sharing a common technology based on the use of pebble tools similar to those found elsewhere in the Old World, including the Indian subcontinent.⁴ Later, around 40,000 B.C.—an approximate date, since there was no abrupt change—wood, especially bamboo, replaced stone as the primary material for tools. Stone tools also became smaller and hunting and gathering gradually gave way to collecting plants and water-dwelling animals. Family groups became more settled and sedentary. Around 22,500 years ago, at the end of the last intrastadial of the last ice age, distinct cultures began to develop—or "crystallize," as Solheim puts it—out of what had previously been a common prehistoric culture. Plant and animal domestication slowly began in a few upland valleys of the mainland, like those around Spirit Cave, although at first horticulture provided only a small proportion of the food supply. Pottery was invented as well, but Solheim doubts that there was a single nuclear area where all of these developments took place. Instead, they diffused across wide areas from different points of origin. By at least 8000 B. C., population growth was forcing people out of the hospitable upland valleys and into less favorable ecological niches, eventually including the lowland valleys and river deltas, where it was necessary to rely more heavily on horticulture for subsistence. Around 4000 B.C., metallurgy began, and at about the same time, major migrations began by water among the islands.

This last development is of some importance to our topic, since it concerns the movement of the so-called Austronesians, i.e.

speakers of Austronesian or Malayo-Polynesian languages, including the ancestors of the various Malay ethnic groups. Dugout canoes had probably been used on the rivers of the mainland long before the fifth millennium B. C. Around 4000 B. C. the outrigger was devised, says Solheim, thus creating the stability needed to navigate the seas. During the third millennium B. C., in a series of distinct migrations, the boat-using peoples entered the islands of Indonesia and the Philippines and also sailed westward, reaching Madagascar around 2000 years ago.

Southeast Asian sailors, Solheim suggests, were not only sailing and trading from the South China Sea to the Bay of Bengal and probably in much of the Indian Ocean during the first millennium B. C. and well into the first millennium A. D., but they "must have had a virtual monopoly on this water until the Arab traders started coming in."⁵ Moreover, it is quite likely that Indian and Chinese cultures have "derived a major portion of their foundation" from Southeast Asian peoples and cultures as a result of such maritime contacts. Of these ancient seafarers Solheim observes:

They probably became well acquainted with the east coast of India. They may well have been the people who brought at least the beginnings of Indian influence back to Southeast Asia. It would not be unreasonable to think that they had something to do with the Cholas becoming a sea power.⁶

Clearly, this is revisionist theorizing on a grand scale. As Solheim himself admits, much of this picture is hypothetical, and subject to revision as archaeological research continues. But acceptance of even a modest portion of this perspective would require a recognition that the earliest Indianized kingdoms referred to in the Chinese records possessed cultures that were already of considerable antiquity and were technologically rather advanced. Moreover, their inhabitants were in a position to teach as well as to learn.

COMMERCE AND THE INDIANIZED STATES

When we proceed from the prehistoric period, for which published archaeological reports—which tend, also, to lag well behind actual discoveries—are still scarce and the scope for

speculation is correspondingly great, to the historic period for which we possess written records, additional archaeological evidence, and an impressive body of existing historical scholarship, the picture becomes much clearer. Yet here, too, there are difficulties related to availability of sources. For one thing, it is very likely that continuing archaeological investigation of sites dating from the first and the early part of the second millennia A. D. will alter many current interpretations of the historic period, since current views and chronologies are still based largely on the work of scholars trained as historians, epigraphists, or specialists in art history, rather than on discoveries made by archaeologists trained to undertake careful excavations. As new sites are investigated, the potsherds and other artifacts unearthed are proving difficult to classify on the basis of conventional periodization and sometimes appear to contradict accepted chronologies.

Furthermore, it is a reflection of the paucity of early indigenous records in Southeast Asia that archaeologists often refer to an intermediate *protohistoric* period (the early part of what I am calling the *historic* period), lasting roughly a millennium, between the earliest Chinese notices and the diffusion across the Southeast Asian mainland of numerous inscribed monuments of the Khmer empire. Archaeology has the greatest potential for illuminating those poorly documented centuries, and for that matter for reconstructing the patterns of life of ordinary people, the non-elites, even in those subsequent centuries for which there are more numerous monuments and inscriptions. An important reason for that potential is that whereas most inscriptions have an "official" tinge and tend to be biased in favor of the activities of royal courts and religious elites, documenting only a narrow range of activities in a few settlements, excavations offer the possibility of providing evidence much greater in quantity, less unevenly distributed in space and time, and more informative about the everyday life of ordinary people for whom "Indianization" may have had less relevance. The most sophisticated archaeological techniques now in use permit the utilization of even the tiniest bits of material—e.g., fragments of bone, seed, and even pollen—so that the environmental, dietary, and other features of everyday life can be systematically reconstructed. Such evidence reveals dimensions of life not illuminated by the study of temples, statuary,

or inscriptions. Still, we can say a great deal about early historic Southeast Asia on the basis of the documentary, monumental and other evidence currently available, provided that we acknowledge its necessary limitations.

When we speak of Indian contacts with Southeast Asia during the centuries prior to about 1000 A.D., we are referring to a diverse set of relationships whose common background consisted of a tenuous but far-flung network of maritime commerce. Although it is convenient to speak of relations between "India" and "Southeast Asia," we must remember that both realms were very diverse and did not act or interact as politically or culturally unified entities. Indeed, in the early centuries A.D., when communication through mangroves or forests and across mountains was more difficult than travel on the rivers and seas, it is likely that inhabitants of some coastal settlements in Southeast Asia had better contacts and more interests in common with other such settlements in India or south China than they had with their own hinterlands, although that situation changed, at least on the mainland, as larger states evolved. The Indianization of Southeast Asia, especially in its state-building aspects, was both preceded and paralleled by the growth of cosmopolitan port societies, characterized by an eclectic blend of cultural elements which cannot easily be described as "Malay" or "Indian" or anything else for which we have ready-made labels.

Long-distance trade primarily involved luxury goods—gems, spices, cloth, fine ceramics, and other items whose value is high in proportion to their bulk. Long before European trading companies were seeking the goods and markets of China, Asian traders were plying segments of the sea route across southern Asia. In the transporting of goods across the great trade arc from the Red Sea to the ports of South China, traders of many lands played their parts. Both men and goods crossed the seas in rhythmic cycles which were determined by seasonal winds. Merchants exchanged goods at many ports along the way, returning home when favorable winds developed. In general, goods traveled farther than men; few individuals traveled across the entire arc. Trade over vast distances by a single ship carrying a single group of merchants would have required capital, sturdy ships, and the determination of the seafarers to stay away from home for several years at a time.

Traditionally, most Asian maritime commerce was carried on by small traders who possessed few of these advantages. Risk was great, profits unpredictable, and the danger of total loss ever-present. Different groups of merchants were prominent in different periods, flourishing and declining in response to political and economic conditions at home and changes in markets and competition abroad.

Thus any attempt to determine which groups of merchants were active in which regions at particular times is very complex. Not only did the ships of many lands use the same routes and frequent the same ports, but a ship often carried as passengers a variety of foreign traders and travelers who completed long voyages on a series of such ships. The fifth century Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Fa Hsien sailed from India to Canton on several vessels which carried over two hundred persons, and Marco Polo, eight centuries later, told of ships whose crews alone numbered anywhere from 150 to 300 men.⁷

INDIA'S EARLY TRADE: WHAT AND WHO

Records concerning the nature and volume of trade across the Mediterranean-to-China trade arc are most abundant at the two extremes—that is, records of the Classical (Graeco-Roman) world and the Arabs at the Mediterranean end, and Chinese records at the other. Hence, we must view much of India's early foreign commerce through Mediterranean sources, just as we must see much of the early maritime trade of Southeast Asia through the eyes of the Chinese.

Early in the first millennium B.C., commerce between the Red Sea and India was already thriving. A passage in I Kings recounts the efforts of King Solomon around 950 B.C. to reconstruct, with Phoenician help, a Red Sea fleet to bring back the exotic goods of "Ophir." It is not clear where Ophir was located, but even if it was no farther away than southern Arabia, it was clearly a source of Indian goods.⁸ Unfortunately, the surviving records concerning the development of navigation across the Arabian Sea in the first millennium B.C. usually deal less with the movement of petty traders along the coasts—surely the central motif in the development of early trade—than with isolated examples of more spectacular,

politically significant voyages. Thus, we know that the Persian king Darius I (521–485 B.C.) directed a Greek adventurer, Scylax, to lead a naval expedition to Darius's newly-conquered eastern provinces along the Indus and from there to the western provinces in Egypt, in an effort to link the Persian empire by sea as well as by land. We also know that Alexander the Great developed grandiose plans to link his far-flung "Alexandrias" by sea and sent out fact-finding expeditions under Nearchus and others. But the Persian and Greek voyages were probably less a cause than a reflection of increasing coastal traffic in the hands of less illustrious individuals whose names have been lost.

More significant than the efforts of Darius and Alexander were those of the Ptolemaic kings of Egypt from the third through the first centuries B.C. The Ptolemies carried out a series of bold explorations of the Red and Arabian Seas, as far as India. In 119 B.C., Eudoxus of Cyzicus was directed to sail to India under the guidance of an Indian whom he met in Alexandria, a voyage which he successfully completed. Greco-Egyptian exploration abroad was paralleled at home by the compilation of treatises on geography and navigation.⁹ The Greeks carried on their trade through a series of intermediaries—Arabs from southern Arabia, the Axumites of Abyssinia, the Somalis, and Indians. Despite increasing Greek activity in the Arabaian Sea, the Arabs seem to have captured the bulk of the trade after the third century B.C. and to have retained it for centuries thereafter.¹⁰ Just as Solomon sought Indian goods in Ophir, so the Greeks and Romans sought them in the ports of south Arabia and apparently believed that many of those products originated there.

The demand for exotic luxury goods by the Roman patriciate greatly stimulated Roman commerce with India. A remarkable array of goods flowed to the Empire: such creatures as elephants, lions, tigers, and parrots; such precious items as gems, pearls, ivory, tortoise-shell, ebony, and Chinese silk; such spices as pepper, cinnamon, cardamom, and ginger; as well as sugar, indigo, cotton, and fruits.¹¹ Since the Romans desired far more from India than Indians desired from Rome, the Romans had to make up the difference with precious metals. This enthusiastic consumption of Asian merchandise created the well-known balance-of-payments problem. Tiberius complained about the

drain of coinge to the East and condemned the extravagant use of jewels and silk. Discoveries of Roman coin hoards in India have demonstrated that the complaint was justified. Few Ptolemaic coins or coins from the Roman Republic have been found, and all of the Republican coins were discovered in northwestern India. But many gold and silver coins of Roman emperors down to Nero have been found. Those of Augustus and Tiberius are particularly numerous.¹²

The Malabar and Coromandel coasts appear to have absorbed the bulk of the Roman trade. It is significant that the find-sites of the Roman coin hoards are overwhelmingly located in south India, especially in the Tamil country. The best known example of a major Indian entrepot for Roman goods is likewise in the heart of the Tamil country, at Arikamēḍu, just south of

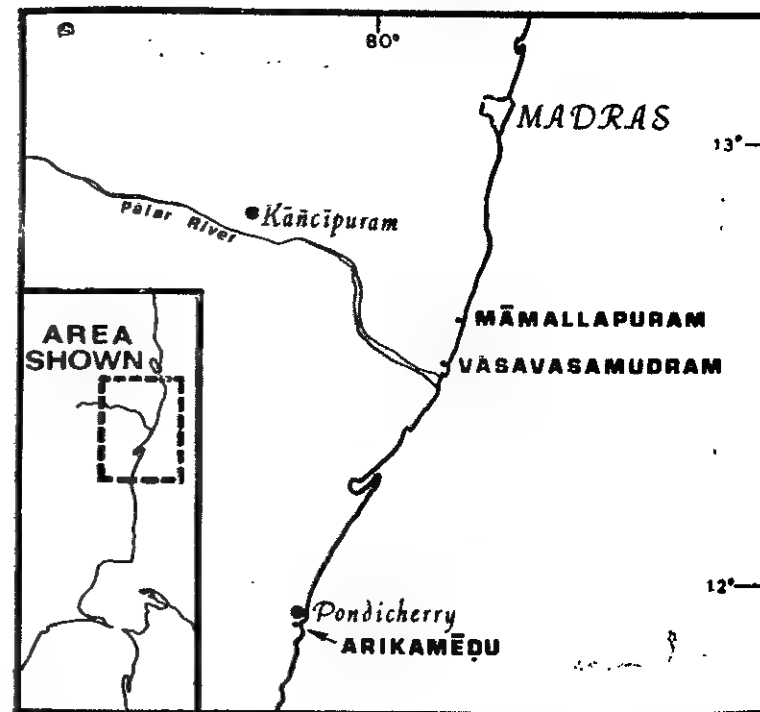


Figure 5: Coromandel Coast, Showing Locations of Vasavasamudram and Arikamēḍu

Pondicherry, excavated in 1945 by Mortimer Wheeler.¹³ The artifacts discovered at Arikamēḍu suggest an important point which is confirmed by other sources—namely, that despite the complaints about the drain of precious metals, gold and silver did not form the sole export of Rome to India. Wine, cameos, bronzes, flax and other plant products from Egypt, as well as coral, were all in demand in India. The amphorae of Arikamēḍu are probably relics, not of Roman occupation or “colonization,” as Wheeler supposed, but of an extensive wine trade.

In 1970, an excavation was undertaken by R. Nagaswamy of the Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology at a similar site, located forty miles to the north at the coastal village of Vasavasamudram in Chingleput district, just eleven miles south of the Pallava-age port of Māmallapuram. Its proximity to the north bank of the Palar river, just a mile away, and hence also to the city of Kāñchipuram, an ancient center of cotton textile manufacture, suggests a possible reason for the presence of Mediterranean artifacts. Although the site is less impressive than Arikamēḍu, the ring wells, terracotta ovens, and other features are similar.¹⁴ These, along with the shell heaps found at Vasavasamudram, suggest to Nagaswamy that it served as an industrial site. Occupation was brief, perhaps a mere 75 years in the third and fourth centuries A.D. and hence a bit later than Arikamēḍu, in the twilight period of Roman trade. (Coins of the fourth century emperor Theodosius, Nagaswamy reminds us, have been found at Māmallapuram.) The few artifacts of Mediterranean origin consist of fragments from an amphora, conical vases, and rouletted ware. One feature of the Arikamēḍu evidence which had escaped Wheeler’s attention but is noted in the Vasavasamudram site report is the presence of large storage pots containing shell lime residue and traces of primary amines, suggesting that the jars may have been used for de-hairing of animal hides. The location at Vasavasamudram of shell heaps and other similarities between the two sites indicate to Nagaswamy that there may well have been a Roman trade in animal hides along the Coromandel coast.

We can catch other glimpses of the Roman trade. In 1937 and 1939, French archaeologists excavated at Begram two extraordinary treasure rooms, walled up since ancient times (probably the second century B.C.) and unopened since. The rooms contained an

astonishing array of luxury goods, mostly from the Mediterranean—delicate Syrian or Egyptian glass vessels; bronze bowls; plaster representations of Athena, Eros, and Psyche; as well as Chinese lacquer bowls, Indian ivory, and much more. Whether the building was the storehouse of a royal court or of a trading community, its contents clearly reflect the wide range of exotic articles which featured in ancient Asian trade.¹⁵ Other Roman goods from the second century A.D. have been discovered in southern Vietnam at the ancient Funanese port of Oc-Eo.¹⁶

In the fifth and sixth centuries, Arab trade went into a sharp decline. Roman trade withered away and south Arabia entered a period of economic stagnation. The Sassanid Persians became active in the Arabian Sea and became very active in trade with China. So strong was the Persian role in the China trade that the Chinese came to apply the term *Po-szu* (“Persian”) indiscriminately to foreign traders dealing in products similar to those of Persia.¹⁷ But in the eighth century the Arabs resumed a vigorous role in maritime trade and by the ninth century, Mesopotamia, under the Abbasid caliphs at Baghdad, again became a magnet for Eastern goods. Arab geographers’ accounts of the ninth century show that the Arabs had a well-known route to the Indies.¹⁸ Indeed, the Arabs were active in the Indonesian archipelago long before Islam gained a foothold among the Malays. By the ninth century, too, the Arabs were trading in Canton. But a round trip from Arabia to south China, timed to catch the seasonal winds, occupied at least a year and a half, allowing only a few months at home before the merchant had to set out again—a rigorous schedule indeed.¹⁹ After the resident foreign merchants perished in the sack of Canton by Huang Ch’ao in 878 A.D., the Arabs withdrew to the islands of Southeast Asia, preferring to meet Chinese and Malay merchants at a safe distance.²⁰ This withdrawal may have further stimulated the development of trading ports in Malaya, Sumatra, and Java, and helped to lay the foundation for the rise of Srivijaya.

The illuminating researches of S. D. Goitein have demonstrated that in the eleventh and twelfth centuries—that is, in Chōla times—Jewish merchants were also active in the trade between the Middle East and India. Working with the scattered documents of the Cairo Geniza, he has discovered several hundred fragments of

letters and legal documents relating to the activities of the merchants and their agents in India, and has even succeeded in tracing the records of a single family engaged in the India trade; the Lebdis, through two and a half centuries.²¹

What part was played by Indians in this trade? Unfortunately, evidence for Indian commerce in ancient times is sketchy at best, and too often we must rely upon indirect evidence. The fact that we must make a distinction between the condition of Indian shipping and the movement of Indian merchants increases the difficulty. In general, it is easier to find evidence for the movement of Indian traders than for the state of Indian shipping.²² From very early times, Indian traders traversed the Asian sea-trade arc from the Red Sea well into Southeast Asia. The *Rg veda* refers to men who go to the sea eager for gain. The *Periplus* says that Indian traders, as well as Greeks and Arabs, frequented the northern coast of Socotra.²³ And we have already seen that Eudoxus was guided to India by an Indian whom he encountered in the Egyptian port of Alexandria, although Indian traders must have been scarce there. In the face of so much competition at the western end of the trade arc, Indians seem to have turned their attention eastward.

It is a curious fact that Southeast Asia once held for Indians the same magical attraction that India later acquired for Europeans. Indian views of Southeast Asia in ancient times are woven into the colorful fabric of religious lore. These views represent Indian merchants' tales as embroidered by popular imagination. Many incidental facts and figures concerning Indian maritime commerce are therefore preserved in Sanskrit and Pali literature. Pali texts refer to long voyages and indicate that mariners used trained birds to guide them to land.²⁴ The Jātakas and the Epics give figures concerning numbers of traders carried by ships frequenting certain ports. Thus, the *Supparaka-Jātaka* relates a tale of a blind mariner who set sail from the port of Broach, leading a company of seven hundred merchants.²⁵ But we should not assume that the authors of these ancient texts shared our modern respect for numbers as statistics. The incidental details partake of the fabulous character of the stories in which they appear. Numbers, in particular, manifest a magical or rhetorical quality: "There were seven

hundred caravans with their beasts on board. In seven days the ship made seven hundred leagues," and so on.²⁶

But at the same time, this literature provides a means of delineating ancient India's geographical horizons, for it preserves many names of places frequented by Indian merchants. The "Golden Island" (*Suvarṇadvīpa*) of the Epics, perhaps a catch-all name for island Southeast Asia, appears in the ancient literature as it must have appeared to ancient Indians, as a fabled land of fabulous wealth. A. L. Basham notes that a favorite Sanskrit epithet for the ocean is *ratnakara*, or "mine of jewels."²⁷ The island of Sumatra was most consistently described as an island of gold.²⁸ Local products, rather than markets for Indian goods, were the chief attractions: gold, silver, gems, camphor—all exotic or precious items. The literary evidence suggests that Indians were frequenting Southeast Asia in search of wealth even before there was a substantial trade with China.

But Buddhist texts reveal that the attraction of wealth was offset by a vivid awareness of the dangers, human and other kinds, which beset ocean voyages. Across the seas, demons inhabited strange lands, while in the oceans' depths lurked horrible monsters capable of devouring an entire ship and its crew. The merchants and seamen of the Jātaka tales were protected by Buddha in his Dipankara, or calmer-of-the-waves, form. Dipankara images in the so-called Amarāvati style are among the most common iconographic evidences of the penetration of Indian culture into Southeast Asia. Two of the Jātaka tales refer to the goddess Maṇimekhalā, appointed by the gods to save shipwrecked mariners who are deserving because of their piety.²⁹ Thus, in the passage cited above from the *Mahajanaka Jātaka*, the ship carrying the 700 merchants foundered, but the goddess saved one sage. Sylvain Levi argues that Maṇimekhalā was especially associated with the Coromandel coast, particularly the port of Puhār, of Kāveripūmpaṭṭiṇam.³⁰ And it is certainly no coincidence that the Tamil poem *Manimekalai*, whose heroine of the title is named after the goddess, has Kāveripūmpaṭṭiṇam as its principal setting.

In addition to the physical hazards which beset these voyages were the restrictions imposed by Hinduism, or rather, by sastric prohibitions against sea voyages. But it would be misleading to interpret theoretical injunctions as descriptions of actual behavior.

We have clear evidence that Indians of various social strata, including Brahmins, regularly voyaged across the seas. Basham notes that several episodes in the eleventh century *Kathasaritsagara* of Somadeva indicate that even by that late date it was possible for Brahmins to travel by sea without losing caste.³¹

THE AGENTS OF INDIANIZATION

The eastward movement of Indian culture presupposes the movement of Indian and perhaps Malay and other mariners, merchants and adventurers along the trade routes. It was the web of maritime trade that provided the shuttle of ships across southern Asia and created the fund of navigational skills which Brahmins and other cultural emissaries had to utilize in order to carry their message across the seas. But the precise nature of the connection between trade and Indianization has for years been a matter of scholarly debate. Reference to the movement of Indian traders was considered by an earlier generation of historians to be a sufficient explanation for the spread of Indian culture. According to the merchant-disseminator theory, traders and adventurers arrived and either imposed their control upon the local population or intermarried to produce local dynasties of Hindu rulers.

That idea was challenged in the 1930s by a young Dutch scholar named J.C. Van Leur, who utilized the sociological theories of Max Weber to reject it as untenable. Stated Van Leur:

As regards the specifically Indian cultural forms—in which, as even the oldest inscriptions extant unanimously bear witness, what was involved was the ritualistic, magical legitimation of the ruler, the offerings, the consecration formulae, the classical, mythological genealogy of the ruling house—it must be considered completely out of the question that traders, even if they had been rich merchant gentlemen, should have participated in such things repeatedly and in a way defined in so much detail. It can only have been the work of Brahmins.³²

Thus he argued that it was the Brahmins alone who could have disseminated the esoteric, Sanskrit lore which characterized the richly ornamented court culture of the Indianized kingdoms. But Van Leur also asserted that “because of the sociological structure of the groups representative of Indian culture and Indian

trade, there was no link at all between the two phenomena,” and thereby seem to have overstated his case. We should guard against following Van Leur too far in his zeal to debunk the trader-disseminator theory, lest we fall into the trap of explaining the entire process of Indianization by reference to Brahmins alone.

Much of the force of his argument depends upon our accepting the hypothesis that Indian culture in Southeast Asia was almost exclusively a court culture. Indian culture probably did have its most profound impact upon a small social elite, for reasons which we shall consider in a moment. But we should not overlook those elements of Indian culture which were adopted on a popular level because they were compatible with local beliefs, interests, and practices. One of the most interesting manifestations of the Indianization of Southeast Asia is the popularity of Epic themes there. The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were translated into local languages, thus influencing the development of their literary traditions.

The Van Leur thesis is intriguing partly because it has demonstrated its power to persuade without having presented an irrefutable case. Regarded as a purely hypothetical construction, the thesis has much to recommend it. And yet, is it not possible to challenge Van Leur on his own ground, with theoretical considerations? For example, consider this question: What was the role of the *artisan* in the dissemination of Indian culture? Even after we have taken account of the strongly indigenous elements in the great religious monuments of Southeast Asia, we must still be greatly impressed by the “Indian-ness” of the underlying concepts and many of the details of their execution. In discussing the migration overseas of Indian artistic motifs, most authors analyze these movements as though the art were separable from human agency. But can we account for the transfer of so many iconographic motifs solely by reference to such portable items as the Amaravati Buddhas?

The movement of Indian artistic motifs, no less than that of ritual practices, had a social context. It reflected the movement of artisans, not merely the movement of art. Moreover—and here we can challenge Van Leur with his own brand of reasoning—Brahmins were as unlikely as traders to have possessed the craft skills required to execute these themes, however familiar.

In India, these skills were the heritage of the artisan guilds.³⁴ It is the movement of these craftsmen from place to place within India in response to the summons of local patrons that is reflected in the evolution and cross-fertilization of those characteristic motifs that we refer to as "regional style." The migration of Indian artistic styles overseas may have been a continuation abroad of the normal movement of Indian artisans to new centers of patronage. This does not mean that there had to be a continual flow overseas of Indian artisans, any more than there had to be a continual flow of Brahmans. Nor does it mean that all, or even most, of the art of Southeast Asia was executed by Indians. On the contrary, the vast majority of surviving monuments were undoubtedly executed by local artisans working from themes previously assimilated into local styles which were then subjected to the same codification and standardization as in India.³⁵

Such considerations constitute serious reservations about Van Leur's theory. But there is an additional consideration which is even more damaging. The merchant-disseminator theory which he sought to refute may be literally true when applied to those commercial centers which owed their origins primarily to trade and were frequented by large numbers of foreign traders, including Indians. The nature of Indianization in a coastal state was surely different from what it was in the capital of an agrarian kingdom with a sizable peasant population. To illustrate the contrast between these two types of Indianized states, we shall start by examining the salient features of the leading agrarian states that were contemporary with the imperial Chōlas, namely Cambodia and Java. Then we shall proceed, in the following chapter, to examine the very different case of Srīvijaya, in the Strait of Malacca, which had a decidedly commercial character.

INDIANIZATION AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

What made Indian culture so attractive to the early kingdoms of Southeast Asia? The sources for the early period present the historian with an interesting paradox. The earliest empire is known to us only through Chinese sources and archaeological discoveries, so that we know only the Chinese name for it: *Fu-nan*. Likewise, what we know of the life of court and commoner in the earliest states can be derived only from Chinese accounts and inference

based upon later information. Yet it is clear from the Chinese sources that even at the time when these kingdoms first emerged in recorded history, their court cultures exhibited decidedly Indian characteristics. To recognize this is not to deny the primacy of indigenous institutions, but merely to recognize that Indian concepts and practices helped to shape them in important ways. This in turn suggests that there was something very appropriate about Indian culture for fulfilling the needs of those evolving states.

Let us begin with a hypothesis: that the rulers of the early Southeast Asian states were not merely passive recipients of Indian culture, but were—as were the Chōla kings—active agents in search of more effective instruments of rule. The acceptance of Indian ideas and practices was not only an active, but also a selective, process. The most conspicuous borrowings were Sanskritized names for rulers; the elaboration of mythical genealogies similar or identical to those prevalent in India; the use of inscriptions (many in Sanskrit), Indian scripts with which to write them, and Indian eras in which to date them; a taste for monumental architecture based upon Indian models and themes; Indian iconography; and the incorporation of Hindu deities into court cults. The result was a series of local variations on Indian themes, as Indian ideas were adapted to local needs.

What purpose did these practices serve? Basically, they validated the political and ritual authority of a royal court seeking to extend and institutionalize its authority over a much wider area than that encompassed by a mere chiefdom. Indian concepts and rituals did not in any direct way create such centralized authority or the enlarged political systems. Rather, Indian concepts served to explain and rationalize royal power which was evolving primarily for other reasons: the capacity of agrarian society to produce an exploitable surplus, the availability of corvée labor for the construction of monuments which were assumed (like royal authority itself) to benefit society as a whole, and above all, the growth of a network of ongoing alliances between the king and various elite families. This last element of statecraft constituted a set of arrangements which could readily be accommodated within an Indianized system of elaborately graded titles, honors, and other

marks of status to be bestowed by the king in his capacity as supreme patron.³⁶

This distinction between royal power and its Indian trappings is important, because just as the scholarly literature on the Indian state has tended to exaggerate its effective centralization and to suppose that the king wielded despotic power, so too the literature on early Southeast Asian kingship has generally exaggerated the authority of the court and implied that its Indianized inscriptions and monuments were the instruments of egocentric autocrats or even megalomaniacs. It is commonly suggested that kings used Indian concepts and rituals in order to demonstrate their divinity and thereby awe the populace into acquiescence. Scholarly preconceptions, together with the elitist biases inherent in the documentary and monumental evidence, have created an exaggerated view of the coercive power of the royal courts.

The reality, I believe, was not so very different from the Chōla situation. Indian concepts of kingship and religion did endow the realm and its ruler with cosmic significance, but such a definition did not merely enhance royal authority by raising it to a higher plane of significance; it also imposed commensurate demands and responsibilities on the court. If kings were to be likened to gods, as indeed they were through the calculated ambiguity so characteristic of the Sanskrit *prastāsis*, then the kings were also expected to exercise those powers for the common good. The alleged divinity of the Indianized king—of which too much has been made, I think, and in many instances has merely been inferred by scholars—may indeed have been a political instrument, but it was an understated and contingent quality rather than an innate characteristic. That is, divinity was an ideal state which the king could strive to attain through proper performance of his martial and ritual functions. This attribute of kingship not only enlarged its scope, literally to cosmic dimensions, but it simultaneously and paradoxically circumscribed its practical exercise by burdening the king with special responsibilities and—we may suppose—anxieties. If monument construction placed extra burdens on the general populace, the royal cult which it supported did no less to the king. Therefore, to say that Indianization served a political purpose is not to say that it merely fostered centralization through the

apotheosis of the king. A far more complex and ambiguous process of development is implied.

This view is not mine alone; it is similar to arguments advanced several years by I. W. Mabbett in his discussion of the *devarāja* cult in Cambodia.³⁷ But I think it is also consistent, at least in spirit, with the revisionist trend in Southeast Asian prehistoric archaeology in that it emphasizes the primacy in indigenous developments. It implies that there were social, economic, and cultural prerequisites to the adoption of Indian culture and that local societies were far more complex than conventional theories of Indianization postulate. As Bernard Groslier has argued, the Khmers had to possess an advanced civilization in order to borrow Indian elements.³⁸ Without denying the potential of Indian concepts as instruments of change, we can acknowledge that the most fundamental changes in society and economy took place prior to the importation of Indian culture.³⁹

A related point worth mentioning is that we should avoid thinking of all the Indianized states of Southeast Asia as borrowing directly from India. They also borrowed from each other, and probably from Sri Lanka as well. The royal courts, where the impact of Indianization was most strongly felt, were subject to changes of fashion when changing conditions in India and neighboring states, but also factional struggles and other purely local changes which we can perceive but dimly, resulted in the rising or declining popularity of particular Hindu gods and Buddhist and the substitution of one cult for another. In addition, there were curious, syncretistic practices such as the Śiva-Buddha cult, and an overall tendency to blend Indian and indigenous concepts. L. P. Briggs has discussed the "syncretistic" character of Indian religion in Southeast Asia at some length.⁴⁰ However, it may be somewhat misleading to dwell excessively on this feature of Indianization. We can easily misread the evidence if we "telescope" facts about court religion which are taken from a period of several centuries. What appears in our distant perspective as an easy transition from one set of religious symbols to another may in fact have reflected the violent rise and fall of competing groups of religious specialists at court. For example, the sponsorship of Buddhism at the court of Angkor by Suryavarman I reflects the fact that his coup was accomplished in alliance with Buddhist

monks against his Saivite rival and the latter's allies in the Brahman "establishment" at court. Factional rivalries could easily coincide with sectarian divisions. So what appear to the distant observer to be casual changes of doctrinal fashion may have been something more serious, namely the outcome of conflicts among rival candidates for the throne, in alliance with groups of powerful ritual specialists seeking to advance their own interests; or alternatively, the efforts of "innovating" monarchs to maintain a position of strength by playing one group off against another.

If Southeast Asian kings appropriated Indian culture to serve the same purposes which we have attributed to the Chōlas, we should be able to detect many of the same mechanisms at work in both realms. A clear example is the use of mythical genealogies. The earliest known Southeast Asian dynastic myth is contained in the third century Chinese description of Funan. According to this story, the Funanese royal line was founded when a foreigner, *Hun-t'ien*, was led to conquer the country by a visionary dream. He did so by shooting an arrow from his magic bow into the boat of Queen Willow-Leaf. She relinquished her power and became the bride of the new king, founder of the dynasty.⁴¹ This appears to be a Chinese retelling of an Indian myth which was brought to Indo-China as part of the Brahmanical apparatus of legitimation. The Indian version is preserved in an inscription from Mison in Champa, which says that a Brahman named Kauṇḍinya used a sacred javelin to mark the site of his capital, and then married the Nāgi Soma. Nāga images continued to be powerful emblems for various dynasties, and became particularly significant for the Khmer royal cult. Its popularity, however, may have been related to indigenous snake cults.⁴²

It may be, as Paul Wheatley has suggested, that the Kauṇḍinya legend reflects the arrival of Kshatriyas, in addition to Brahmins and merchants.⁴³ But K.A. Nilakanta Sastri noted that Kauṇḍinya is a well known Brahman *gotra* name, and argued that the Kauṇḍinyas, like Agastya and his clan, were one of the Aryanizing groups, performing overseas the same functions which they had performed in India.⁴⁴ But a too-literal interpretation of these stories can be misleading. Brahmins could easily have imported such stories in order to enable kings to attribute their authority to miraculous origins. The fact that Agastya cults

appeared in Java certainly suggests that Indian culture-hero myths of a more general type were operative.

The term "Indianization" is sometimes used by historians as though it were interchangeable with "Hinduization," the term which the distinguished French scholar Georges Coedes introduced many years ago.⁴⁵ But as Coedes himself came to acknowledge, Buddhism also had a significant role to play, so the term "Hinduization" is too narrow. Whether Buddhism spread via the same mechanisms and for the same reasons that Hinduism did is a difficult question which cannot yet be answered. Konrad Bekker has suggested that Buddhism had greater popular appeal than did Hinduism because of Buddhism's "unpolitical bias" and less elitist character.⁴⁶ And John Cady has argued that "in its acceptability to the peoples of Southeast Asia Buddhism was strong where Hinduism was weak, and vice versa. As a revealed faith repudiating caste and race, Buddhism could be transmitted by Indian missionary devotees and also by Southeast Asian converts and pilgrims. It was also a traders' religion. Hinduism, on the other hand, could be transmitted only by high-caste immigrants, Kshatriya or Brahman."⁴⁷

There is no doubt that Theravada Buddhism eventually came to command a popular allegiance in Southeast Asia that Hinduism was never able to achieve. But it may be doubted whether, in its initial stages, the popular appeal of Buddhism—which first appeared in Southeast Asia in its Mahāyāna form—was much greater than that of Hinduism. Except in the trading ports, which attracted many Buddhist merchants, the great kingdoms of Southeast Asia treated Mahāyāna Buddhist monks, as well as Brahmins, as cultural emissaries, and both became sacerdotal elites. So at first Buddhism, like Hinduism, initially appeared as an aristocratic faith which was not immediately relevant to the peasants.

THE AGRARIAN KINGDOMS : JAVA

The geographical proximity of Sumatra and Java made it inevitable that their histories would be intertwined. Yet they present an interesting contrast, for great centers of power developed on each island in quite different environments and drew sustenance from different resources. Sumatra fostered the development of

coastal-commercial states. Circumstances on Java, on the other hand, were more comparable to those in the Chōja or Khmer realms in that the existence of a productive agricultural hinterland oriented the Javanese kings less exclusively toward trade and more toward the control of land and its peasant population, and encouraged spectacular building projects. Coincident to the emergence of Śrīvijaya in the Malacca Strait was the growth on Java of the kingdom of Matāram. It is with this state that the greatest architectural remains of Java are associated. While Śrīvijaya was oriented toward the coasts, rivers and sea-lanes, Matāram looked toward its mainland counterparts, including the rising empire of the Khmers in Cambodia.

During the so-called central Javanese period, from roughly the seventh to tenth centuries, before the political center of gravity shifted to east Java, the Javanese kings patronized either Śaivism or Buddhism in the central portion of the island. Written records from this period are few, and historians have argued even about the number of dynasties present. But the most important kings, judging from the zeal of their monument-construction projects, were the Sailendras, who were ruling in central Java by at least 778 A.D., and perhaps as early as 732 A.D. if we regard as a Sailendra the ruler Sañjaya who is mentioned in a *liṅga*-foundation of that date. The Sailendras seem to have been primarily Buddhists, but members of the same dynasty not uncommonly embraced different religions or changed allegiance from one to another.

The title Sailendra, like Fu-nan, means "King of the Mountain." Its use by Javanese kings suggests that they were trying to appropriate the prestige symbols of their Funanese predecessors on the mainland. The significance of the title is not clear today, and may have lost its original meaning even by the eighth century. It may have referred to the abode of Śiva, perhaps a translation into Śaivite terms of local conceptions regarding high places as the abode of gods.

The Sailendras were responsible for the construction on the Kedu plain of the greatest monuments in Java, although to some extent they elaborated themes which were already popular under their Śaivite predecessors. One element of continuity was the *chandi*, or temple-tomb, dedicated to Hindu or Buddhist deities that

were conceived of as mystically united with the personality of the king in life and death. More elaborate conceptions were also translated into architecture. The Sailendra king Viṣṇu, who ascended the throne in 775 A.D., was probably responsible for the construction of the Borobudur, one of the world's most impressive religious monuments. It is a cosmic temple-mountain and tomb imbued with multiple levels of meaning, of which the political meaning is the most obscure. Basically, it appears to be a vast, metaphysical allegory on Mahāyānist principles, its layered terraces of Buddhas arranged to symbolize increasing levels of self-realization, the uppermost level representing the attainment of Buddhahood.

It is precisely this habit of looking at the world—society, as well as the cosmos—as a hierarchical ordering of layers, increasing in importance from bottom to top, that the prestige-minded rulers of Southeast Asia were anxious to appropriate in order to secure for themselves a status which had cosmic sanctions. As Louis Dumont has argued at length, it is this very concept of hierarchy which not only characterizes Indian social and political arrangements, but indeed pervades traditional thought about everything, including the very nature of the cosmos.⁴⁸ It is not surprising that in Java and other parts of Southeast Asia, this way of looking at the nature of things found a receptive audience. In the monuments of Java we see the results of contacts with India which involved not mere commercial relations, but a traffic in significant ideas.

THE AGRARIAN KINGDOMS: CAMBODIA

If the Indianization of Java was marked by the elaborate use of Indian cosmological ideas and the development of a cult of royal ancestor worship in Hindu or Buddhist guise, Indian culture was manifested in Cambodia, especially in the Angkor period, by an even more elaborate development of these themes. The early Khmer kings turned away from Funanese Buddhism and patronized Śaivism. The notable feature of Khmer Hinduism was the royal cult of the *liṅga*, which was associated with a gradual development of the temple-mountain style of religious architecture.

Jayavarman II established a unified Khmer kingdom in about

802 A.D. A restless and ambitious ruler, he established four different capitals before his death in 850 A. D., the last at Hariharālaya, just to the southeast of the eventual hub of the kingdom, Angkor. There had been close ties with the Javanese, and Jayavarman may have come from Java to ascend the Khmer throne, although the circumstances are obscure. But Jayavarman's pretensions prompted him to repudiate his Javanese political connections, which he did by ordering a Brahman to inaugurate a special ritual. This action established the cult known as *devarāja*, and its creation not only constituted a gesture of independence from Java, but also asserted a claim by Jayavarman's family to continue indefinitely as rulers of the Khmers. The cult was founded by the Brahman Hiranyadāma, who passed his esoteric knowledge to Jayavarman's chief priest, whose family was assigned sole responsibility for officiating at the *devarāja*. It should be noted in this connection that although *devarāja* has often been casually translated as "god-king," that is only one possible meaning of the phrase. Neither Jayavarman nor any other Khmer ruler is specifically referred to as a *devarāja*, so we must view this term as the name of a rite, not a concept of divine kingship. There may indeed have been a god-king concept, but its existence has been merely inferred by scholars. It cannot be demonstrated from the ambiguous inscriptional references to *devarāja*.⁴³

What is clear, however, is that such Hindu ritual practices provided a ceremonial idiom in which to cement political alliances, and it is this set of arrangements, much more than any alleged doctrine of divine kingship, which constituted the political relevance of Indianization at Angkor. By instituting the *devarāja* cult, Jayavarman sought to establish an ongoing relationship between his own family, as hereditary rulers of the Khmers, and a priestly family of wealth and influence, seeking to monopolize a ritual which became the center of a royal cult. Similarly, we may perceive in the allocation of other offices and titles in the Khmer state the workings, not of a civil service of the modern type, but a reward system by means of which the kings sought to secure the allegiance, or at least the acquiescence, of important families so that their interests would be interwoven with those of the ruling family. This, argues Mabbett, is the significance of the multitude of ranks and offices, mostly of a ceremonial or honorary character,

which appear in Khmer epigraphy. "We are confronted," he observes, "by a general class of families of substance all seeking recruitment into the royal service or other forms of recognition of their status."⁴⁴ It need hardly be emphasized that this is not a picture of a despotic regime, but rather of a kingdom in which a grand royal style masked a reality of delicate balance and continual negotiation, much like the situation which prevailed in the Chōla kingdom.

Saivism provided the framework for the *devarāja* cult, which centered on the worship of a *liṅga*. Later kings sometimes preferred Vaishnavism or Mahāyāna Buddhism, and in those reigns ritual activity centered on a Vishṇu or *bodhisattva* image, although it is not clear whether such practices were thought to represent a continuation of the *devarāja* cult. In connection with the *devarāja*, Jayavarman II introduced a type of temple architecture which became the characteristic monument of the Angkor period. The royal *liṅga* was housed in a sanctuary atop a stepped pyramid, a temple which the Khmers regarded as a symbolic mountain. The sanctuary apparently served as a point of contact between men and gods, through the mediation of the sacred *liṅga* bearing the name of the king conjoined with that of Śiva (e.g., Indreśvara).⁴⁵ Scholars once believed that the Khmer temple-mountain enshrined an abstract essence of divine kingship, which was somehow transmitted from one ruler to the next. But Coedes demonstrated that the *liṅga* and temple were specifically associated with the personalities of individual kings.

It is the existence of these temples, much more than the *devarāja* cult per se, which seems to suggest a concept of divine kingship, but here too we must rely heavily on inference, and can only guess at how it might have been defined. For example, the discovery by Coedes that the temples contained what appear to be relic chambers suggests that these monuments were really funerary temples and that the king was merged with the deity only after death. This doctrine would of course have placed each new ruler under a heavy burden, and no little anxiety, to complete his own temple-tomb. Furthermore, these temples were not dedicated solely to kings, since wives and other relatives of the rulers also had such temples, and in the provinces the great landed families had their own lineage temples, local counterparts of the great

temples in the capital. If we are really dealing here with an instance of "divine kingship", it is a more diffuse and peculiar conception than we are likely to imagine by that phrase.

The capital was not settled at Angkor until the late ninth century, when Yaśovarman (889–900 A.D.) built his city of Yaśodharapura there. His reign was noted not only for its great monuments, but also for his water-control projects, designed to prevent runoff of the seasonal torrents and to preserve water for the dry months. The Khmers developed a technique of constructing raised dikes for the creation of large, artificial lakes.⁵² Elaborate irrigation networks distributed river water to the rice fields, facilitating a highly intensive agriculture and the concentration of a dense population around Angkor. Groslier argues that the Khmers were preoccupied with "space-organization", and that we must see Khmer art and architecture as expressions of the entire agricultural complex.⁵³ In the early stages of the kingdom's development, the continual shifting of capitals and building of new temples by the rulers may have served the same function, within a more limited area, as was provided by Chōla patronage of rural temples. Groslier succinctly describes the effect:

To build a town or erect a temple was in reality to dig new canals, create reservoirs, open up new land for cultivation, and people some desert region which was then provided with a sanctuary for the practice of the cult. Contrary to a too frequently expressed view, the multiplicity of vast religious edifices was a sign of progress rather than a cause of the country's impoverishment.⁵⁴

It was in Yaśodharapura and its successor cities on the site of Angkor that the Khmers constructed their greatest monuments, the bulk of them dedicated to Hindu deities. The most impressive of all, Angkor Wat, was dedicated to Viṣṇu, or rather to king Suryavarman II (ca. 1113–1150 A.D.) and Viṣṇu simultaneously. But Hindu cults were often combined with one another and with indigenous ideas. Images of Hindu gods and *bodhisattvas* were identified with the personalities of kings, queens, and court figures, and bore their names.

The most extravagant phase of temple-building occurred during the reign of Jayavarman VII (1181–1219 A.D.) whose identifiable monuments are equal in quantity to those of all other Angkorian

kings combined. His most ambitious project was Angkor Thom, a walled city eight miles in circumference, surrounded by a moat and centered upon the remarkable Buddhist temple-mountain of Bayon. As hypothesized by Coedes, the city was a cosmogram, a miniature representation of the universe as described in the Purāṇas. According to the puranic geography, the world consists of a series of alternating oceans and continents surrounding the central island-continent, Jambudvīpa. Just as this continent is at the center of the continental rings, so at its center is Mount Meru, abode of the gods and hub of the universe, which revolves about it. Angkor Thom was designed as a miniature universe, in the center of which was the Bayon, a symbolic Meru. This arrangement transformed the capital of the empire into the magic center of the cosmos, an architectural expression of the principle of terrestrial-celestial parallelism, according to which kingdom and cosmos interact and a king's just rule maintains cosmic harmony.⁵⁵

According to Coedes, the Bayon was dedicated to the king himself, enshrined as a *bodhisattva*. Displaying four huge stone face on the sides of its fifty-odd towers, the temple was intended—in this ingenious interpretation—to radiate the powerful and beneficent aura of the king to the most remote parts of the realm. We can scarcely imagine a more striking symbol of aspiration to political-cum-spiritual dominion. Whether or not such interpretation are correct, the Bayon and other monuments constructed by Jayavarman VII provide vivid testimony to his organizational ability and energy. It is sometimes suggested that the Angkor kingdom subsequently declined because he placed an excessive strain on its resources, but there is insufficient evidence to support that view.

There is a much clearer correlation between the king's dedication to construction projects and his zeal for conquest. Jayavarman made war against the Chams, extended his kingdom northward into present-day Laos, and laid claim to much of the Malay peninsula and Burma. In fact, among the Khmers there appears to have been a close connection between "conquering" and "constructing," just as there was among the Chōlas. Construction projects were not undertaken at the expense of political expansion, or vice versa.

Whether the same internal political factors promoting conquest

were at work in the two states is more difficult to say. I shall leave it to scholars with more specialized knowledge of Khmer politics than I possess to address that question. Certainly there were internal tensions and instabilities in the Khmer state. The mechanisms for allocating goods and prestige were not sufficient to keep all parties satisfied—perhaps necessarily so, since some families (and of course disgruntled members of the royal family) received less than others. That retribution could result is apparent from the fact that some rulers appear to have come to the throne through violence and brought their allies to positions of power and prestige as well. Patronage, faction, intrigue, and at least occasionally fratricidal bloodshed constituted the reality behind the facade of royal self-glorification and the claim of cosmic power. If the proliferation of monuments was not a prelude to economic collapse, neither was it a sign of royal omnipotence.

INDIANIZATION AND POLITICAL DRAMATURGY

These remarks have by no means exhausted the manifestations of Indianization in Southeast Asia, nor have they even mentioned all of the Indianized states in which these influences were exhibited. But they have suggested some of the processes involved. Above all, Indianization provided a generalized model of political organization and integration, as well as a remarkable assemblage of myths and symbols through which the highest political and religious aspirations of a society could be expressed. It provided kings with exemplary roles to play and an accompanying set of behavioral standards so that order and prosperity might prevail.

A moment ago I used the word *facade*, thereby hinting at a distinction between appearance and reality, between the idealized image which rulers sought to project and the less impressive actuality which the consciously fostered impression served to disguise. This distinction lends itself to a theatrical analogy of the type which sociologist Erving Goffman developed some years ago to explain social encounters in general. It is a dramaturgical metaphor which features of royal behavior in south India. A recognition that political theatrics, through the conscious emulation of Epic heroes, gods, and other role models, constitutes one of the typical features of Indian kingship is, I believe, useful to an

understanding of traditional political behavior and especially to an understanding of the stereotypical characterization of it in literary sources, especially inscriptions.

Recently anthropologist Clifford Geertz has employed this theatrical metaphor even more forcefully in explaining the character of the pre-colonial state in Bali, in a book entitled *Negara; the Theatre State in Nineteenth Century Bali*.⁵⁶ Since his larger purpose in discussing the "theatre state" is to construct a model which explains the characteristic form of the Indianized (or as he says, Indicized) state in Indonesia, and indeed of the Indic mainland states of Southeast Asia as well, his central argument is important.

According to Geertz, the premise of Balinese political dramaturgy was that the court—and-capital, the seat of power regarded as a microcosm of the supernatural order, should provide a faultless image of civilized existence, an "exemplary center," thereby shaping the world around it into a rough approximation of its own excellence. The following excerpt conveys the flavor of Geertz's analysis:

The expressive nature of the Balinese state was apparent through the whole of its known history, for it was always pointed not toward tyranny, whose systematic concentration of power it was incompetent to effect, and not even very methodically toward government, which it pursued indifferently and hesitantly, but rather toward spectacle, toward ceremony, toward the public dramatization of the ruling obsessions of Balinese culture: social inequality and status pride. It was a theatre state in which the kings and princes were the impresarios, the priests the directors, and the peasants the supporting cast, stage crew, and audience. ... Court ceremonialism was the driving force of court politics; and mass ritual was not a device to shore up the state, but rather the state, even in its final gasp, was a device for the enactment of mass ritual. Power served pomp, not pomp power.⁵⁷

That passage constitutes a succinct if perhaps extreme formulation of his thesis, one which I am reluctant to accept completely in that it suggests that ceremonial behavior constituted an end in itself. But it is doubtful that Geertz intends that

characterization to be taken too literally; for as his further discussion demonstrates, the essence of such theatrical behavior, despite its apparent self-absorption, lies in its practicality. To establish the court as an "exemplary center" is to reflect the order of the universe and thereby promote the welfare of the state. To acknowledge this characteristic is to view ritual dramaturgy as a political instrument, and not merely as an end in itself. At any rate, Geertz's approach to political analysis, the richness of which is scarcely conveyed by this brief reference, suggests the centrality of ritual, ceremonialism, and theatrical behavior generally to the Indianized state. And it requires no special effort of imagination to see how this thesis, with appropriate modifications in each case, could be applied to a wide variety of Indic states, including those in India.

HARMONY AND CONFLICT IN INDIANIZED ASIA

Before we turn our attention more fully to the Southeast Asian maritime realm and discuss the characteristics of its coastal-commercial political systems, we would do well to remind ourselves that in this chapter we have been examining certain features of the contacts between India and Southeast Asia prior to the eleventh century. In spite of the popularity of colonization theories in the scholarly literature on Indianization, the fact is that conflicts, invasions, and conquests appear to have played a negligible role in those contacts, as far as we can tell from our very inadequate sources. Southeast Asia was voluntarily Indianized for essentially the same reasons that southern India was: because the Hindu and Buddhist traditions provided a useful set of organizing principles and accompanying values for ordering political life, defining social and political prestige, and allocating rewards.

The fact that this process was peaceful may simply reflect the limited military potential for long-distance maritime conquest—as opposed to commercial contacts and traffic in ideas—rather than any consciously benevolent intentions, prior to roughly the end of the first millennium A.D. Mere possession of common culture, after all, was never sufficient to keep neighboring kingdoms in India at peace; indeed, even Indian political *theory* militated against such cordial neighborliness. So it is likely that what

prevented chronic conflict over much longer distances was simply a combination of a limited naval capacity (a lack of means) and insufficient motivation (a lack of sufficient rewards.) Ironically, it was the very commercial success of maritime enterprise in island Southeast Asia, and the growing prosperity of its coastal states during the first millennium A. D., which gradually altered that situation by attracting attention and enhancing the rewards.

Srivijaya : Maritime Empire or Mirage?

If the Chōla kingdom can be characterized, in Burton Stein's terminology, as a "segmentary" state, then Srivijaya, which at its height supposedly encompassed both shores of the Strait of Malacca and perhaps even the Malay peninsula as far north as the Isthmus of Kra, might best be described as a "fragmentary" state! The more effort scholars expend trying to understand—or even to identify—its scattered components and define their mutual relationships, the more elusive and peculiar Srivijaya's structure seems. Although the name of Srivijaya has not only been conferred upon a political system but also assigned to a heterogeneous art style that flourished chiefly in the Malay peninsula, and historians of the Philippines have even debated the existence of a "Srivijayan period" in Philippine history, there are still a few historians who seem to be haunted by a suspicion that the entire conception of Srivijaya as currently presented in the textbooks might be just a figment of the scholarly imagination, generated by a wildly erroneous reading of the epigraphical and other literary evidence. And even within the tradition of a less skeptical approach to the data, the difficulty of defining the structure and continuity of this enigmatic state has become one of the continuing problems of Southeast Asian historiography.

Srivijaya is the one major state of early Southeast Asia for which the current archaeological evidence is most sharply at variance with the accepted historical picture based on literary sources. In fact, it must be said that current historical scholarship on Srivijaya is in a state of disarray, particularly due to the surprising results of the 1974 archaeological excavations at Palembang—the implications of which are considered below—and

it is likely that successful excavations in other parts of Sumatra will be necessary before much order can be restored to the literature. The result is that any historian who wishes to discuss the history of Srivijaya up to the time of the Chōla attack in 1025 A.D. must now write with less confidence in the bulk of the relevant scholarly literature than was possible a decade ago. Although recent interpretations of Srivijaya's structure, especially by archaeologist Bennet Bronson, have presented a plausible picture of this unusual state, some differences of scholarly opinion remain and many puzzles, such as the nature of the relationship between Srivijaya's heartland on the Sumatran coast—if indeed the conventional identification of that location is correct—and its presumed dependencies on the Malay peninsula, are as yet unsolved. There are few details of its history which are so firmly established that they could not be radically revised by further archaeological or even literary discoveries. The reader should therefore bear in mind that the following description of the maritime state which was on the receiving end of Rājendra's naval attack is still somewhat hypothetical, and there are many aspects of its story that are unknown and may remain so.

Although the structure of Srivijaya may be more puzzling than that of the other Indian and Southeast Asian states which we have been considering, its economic foundation is easier to understand, for it was created by and remained dependent upon maritime commerce. Srivijaya is a prime example of the coastal-commercial state as contrasted with the inland-agrarian state.¹ Unlike the agrarian kingdoms, it left behind no impressive monuments, and its literary traces are so scattered and ambiguous that prior to 1918, most scholars were unaware that such a kingdom had existed. In that year, the brilliant French scholar Georges Coedes published his now-classic article entitled "Le royaume de Crivijaya," in which he rescued the kingdom from oblivion.² Since that time, a careful sifting of evidence from local inscriptions and Chinese, Indian, and Arabic sources by Coedes and others has provided a rough outline of Srivijaya's history. So firmly has the state of Srivijaya become established in standard histories of Southeast Asia that it is hard to believe that only a few decades ago its existence was unknown.

The rediscovery of Srivijaya involved the equating of a number

of facts which initially had been treated as unrelated data. Chinese accounts of embassies and Buddhist pilgrims' itineraries had mentioned *Fo-shih* or *Shih-li-fo-shih* or *San-fo-tsi*. As early as 1861, Stanislas Julien, in an effort to determine the Sanskritic equivalents for Chinese toponyms, reconstructed *Fo-shih* as *Sri Bhoja*, an enterprising but misleading identification which was repeated by later authors.³ Samuel Beal, after studying the Chinese itineraries, concluded that Palembang, on the Musi river in Sumatra, was the logical area in which to look for material remains of *Shih-li-fo-shih*/*Sri Bhoja*.⁴ Arab geographers had spoken admiringly of the empire of *Zabag* or *Zabaj*, which W. J. Groeneveldt, in a significant synthesis, identified with the Chinese *San-fo-tsi*.⁵ So by 1909, it was possible for G. E. Gerini to equate *Zabag*, *San-fo-tsi*, Palembang, and *Sri Bhoja*.⁶

Meanwhile, the now well-known Ligor inscription from the east coast of the Malay peninsula had been studied by Louis Finot.⁷ Finot noted that the ruler was referred to in the inscription as *Srivijayendraraja*, and interpreted the reference as a name, i. e., King Srivijaya. Hendrik Kern followed this lead by making the same translation of the title given in the Kota Kapur inscription from the island of Bangka, off the Sumatran coast.⁸

In his 1918 article, Coedes tied together all of these threads by demonstrating that *Srivijayendraraja* and similar titles referred to the king of Srivijaya. Srivijaya was the name of a place, not of a king. He proceeded to replace Julien's equation of *Fo-shih* = *Sri Bhoja* with a new equation of *Fo-shih* = *Srivijaya* = Palembang. The Sailendra dynasty, mentioned on side "B" of the Ligor inscription, was identified by Coedes as the ruling house of Srivijaya. Since the appearance of that article, a careful examination of evidence from inscriptions and Chinese, Indian, and Arabic sources by Coedes and others has provided a rough outline of Srivijaya's history, although the details are by no means entirely clear, and the outline itself is still problematic. The Tanjore inscription, which catalogues Rājendra's alleged conquests in Southeast Asia, is of course directly relevant to this issue, but we shall postpone consideration of it until the last chapter. Yet it should be emphasized at this point that the list of thirteen places—Srivijaya and a dozen others—which Rājendra claims to have conquered should not be viewed as a list of the constituent parts

of the Srivijayan empire, although some authors have taken it to be such.

SRIVIJAYA AND ASIAN TRADE

Srivijaya was a child of the trade routes. According to the conventional interpretation which has developed since 1918, Srivijaya began to expand during the second half of the seventh century A.D. from a single commercial center at Palembang, in southeastern Sumatra, until it dominated both sides of the Strait of Malacca, and perhaps additional territory, playing a dominant role in Asian trade for a half-millennium or more. This development climaxed a process of commercial growth in maritime Southeast Asia which had begun centuries earlier and which was directly related to the profitable transit trade.⁹ We lack sufficient evidence to analyze India's trade with the western islands in detail, but it appears that one Indonesian product desired by Indians was exotic wood. Indians may also have sought drugs and other ingredients for homeopathic medicines.

But the truly significant growth of the trading ports of the Malay peninsula and Sumatra resulted from their function as links in the transit trade through Southeast Asia to China. In his book on the origins of Srivijaya, entitled *Early Indonesian Commerce*, O.W. Wolters has argued that the Indian trade predated any direct Indonesian trade with China, since the Chinese were initially interested in the luxury goods of the Roman Orient, rather than in forest products of Southeast Asia. Yet circumstances forced the Chinese to rely more and more on maritime trade through that area, for inroads into northern China by nomadic invaders, after the disintegration of the Later Han dynasty in the third century A.D., meant that south China had no easy access to the Central Asian trade routes and had to rely upon maritime trade instead. It was for precisely this reason that information about Funan, which sat astride that route is southern Indochina, appears in Chinese records in the third century. Initially, the China trade did not go to Southeast Asia, but through it. Yet the increased traffic was itself sufficient to stimulate Indonesian shipping. Some time between 200 and 400 A.D., Indonesian ships began to carry foreign cargoes directly to China, and Chinese traders crossed the China Sea in

ships operated by Malays and perhaps Chams and other seafaring peoples who are difficult to identify.

Trading ports had arisen not only on the Malayan and Sumatran coasts immediately adjacent to the Malacca Strait but also far up both coasts of the Malay peninsula, which separates the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal from the Gulf of Siam and South China Sea. A glance at a map of Southeast Asia will suggest why so many trading settlements—loosely, “city-states”—arose on both sides of the narrow, isthmian portion of the peninsula. The Malay peninsula constituted a natural barrier to the passage of shipping across Southeast Asia. It funneled all China-bound shipping through the Malacca or, rarely, the Sunda strait. Ships coming from India, crossing the Bay of Bengal during the northeast monsoon, normally approached the Strait of Malacca by sailing along the eastward side of the Andaman islands or else passing south of them, through the ten degree channel between the Andaman and Nicobar islands. Even if they then managed to make their way slowly through the sheltered strait, they could go no farther than southeastern Sumatra, where they had to await the onset of the southwest monsoon to cross the South China Sea. Apparently many mariners avoided the troublesome passage around the tip of the Malay Peninsula, not to mention the piracy endemic in those waters, by landing on the west coast of the isthmian tract; from there goods could be transported to the other side of the isthmus via portage routes.

This rhythmic shuttle of ships gave rise to a series of linked ports, which various scholars have taken pains to identify through comparison of names in Indian, Chinese, Arabic and other sources.⁹ According to the *Liang Shu*, the Funanese ruler Fan Shih-man conquered perhaps ten of these isthmian kingdoms, thus bringing them under the dominion of a mainland power. But Funanese overlordship in the Malay peninsula dissolved in the sixth century A.D.; thereafter, more than ten states appeared to Chinese view by sending embassies to the imperial court.¹⁰ These commercial centers were the gathering places of merchants and pilgrims awaiting the favorable winds, so it is not surprising that they should manifest a variety of cultural influences, especially Indian.

The port of Palembang, which Coedes identified as the Srivijayan capital, was located beyond the southern end of the

Strait of Malacca and oriented toward the Chinese end of the trade-arc. This port emerged on the coast whose seafaring inhabitants, according to Wolters, developed the Indonesian trade with China. Unlike the inhabitants of northwestern Sumatra, reputed for their savagery, these coastal Malays were mobile and enterprising. When the development of a Chinese market for western Sumatran products created additional economic opportunities, merchants of southeastern Sumatra already active in the China transit trade managed to maintain their commercial advantage.

The development of this Sino-Indonesian trade, as analyzed by Wolters, was a curious by-product of the Chinese trade with western Asia. The Chinese came to refer to most Persian-type products and the non-Chinese who dealt in them as “Persian.” This *Po-ssu* trade consisted chiefly of the aromatics frankincense and myrrh. Indonesians carrying these goods to China apparently discovered that a product similar to frankincense could be obtained from western Sumatran pine resins. The early traffic in Sumatran pine resin may have been characterized by its surreptitious substitution for genuine Persian frankincense. But by the sixth century, the Chinese were accepting both products and distinguishing between them. The Chinese attributed this pine resin to the “southern merchants,” but at the same time referred to it as a *Po-ssu* product, a description to which the Indonesians can scarcely have objected, since it had come to signify the cream of China’s foreign trade.¹¹

By the sixth century, the range of Indonesian exports had expanded to include perfumes and drugs such as camphor and benzoin. As new kingdoms emerged in the Malay peninsula and the islands and sent missions to the Chinese court, their rulers were careful to include perfumes and drugs among the pleasing gifts. Such missions and gifts were needed to maintain official sanction for the China trade. They also constituted part of the trade itself, since the rulers of petty kingdoms commonly carried on their own commerce. Exchanging gifts with Chinese emperors constituted trade with diplomatic overtones, interpreted by each side to its own advantage. Placing the China trade on an official footing gave the rulers of harbor kingdoms an edge over independent merchants, and thereby provided them with useful connections which could be employed to lure traders into

operating from their harbors. The ruler could boast of the advantages to be derived from trading in his name. However, as Wolters cautions, we should not assume that every mission recorded in Chinese sources was in aid of commerce.¹²

Since the enterpots owed their existence almost exclusively to trade and the highly-mobile Malay traders settled in the most advantageous harbors, such enticements were necessary. The traders probably felt little loyalty to one port as opposed to another. But trading advantages, and above all the promise of protection, were strong inducements to enter. A defended harbor at least protected traders from piracy—which no doubt increased in tandem with commerce—as long as they were in port. Inhospitable terrain protected the port from attack by land, while a harbor barrier and a flotilla protected it from attack by sea. The empire of Śrīvijaya, in this conventional interpretation, was a network of protected harbors whose defenses had been extended out into the strait to protect and perhaps control shipping. Thus, coastal trading settlements could flourish despite the fact that they had no large, local manpower base such as that which was at the disposal of the Javanese and Cambodian rulers.

Since the earliest Old Malay inscriptions and Chinese pilgrims' accounts of Śrīvijaya reveal a realm already well developed, we must piece together the pre-Śrīvijayan and early Śrīvijayan periods from the bare lists of embassies to the Chinese court. Unfortunately, utilizing this data forces us to assume that the appearance and disappearance of place-names from Chinese records corresponds roughly to their appearance and disappearance from the political scene as independent entities, which is a considerable assumption. As Wolters demonstrates, the Chinese records indicate that during the pre-Śrīvijayan era, periods when several Indonesian kingdoms sent embassies to China alternated with periods when only one place sent them. If, as this pattern suggests, one state periodically dominated others, then Śrīvijaya was only the greatest of a series of imperial systems in which one port exercised hegemony over its neighbors. If that is so, Śrīvijaya's imperial predecessor was what the Chinese called *Kan-t'o-li*, which developed into the state of Malāyu, or Jambi, in Sumatra. The dominion of *Kan-t'o-li* gave way to a period from 608 to 669 A. D. in which several kingdoms were again

recorded by the Chinese. According to the *Sui Shu*, "more than ten kingdoms of the southern frontiers brought tribute" in the period 605-161 A.D., although some these, as *To-lo-po-ti* or Dvāravati, were states of the mainland, rather than the island world.¹³

Here it would be appropriate to introduce a concept which might help us to recognize such recurrent patterns of dominance and atomization, at least in the maritime realm. I refer to the of a "dominant port"—that is, an entrepot which over a given period of time monopolizes or controls the maritime trade of its immediate region. As such, it also becomes a redistribution center for local goods, carrying on a trade with the nearby ports and immediate hinterland, if any, which it dominates. A dominant port may arise because of its military/naval power, or because of its inherent geographical or economic advantages, or a combination of these factors. If Wolters is correct, the Śrīvijayan empire arose because one such port, Palembang, felt economically threatened and devised an effective military response. As the development of an international trade in Sumatran products caused a shift in the center of trade northward along the Sumatran coast, Palembang forcibly resisted a natural shift in commercial advantages to ports such as Malāyu and thus maintained its position as dominant port.

The earliest inscriptions and the account of the Buddhist pilgrim I-Ching appear to date from the early period of Śrīvijayan expansion. The Old Malay inscriptions, all of which date from the 690s, reveal the turbulence of conquest. Of these six stone inscriptions from Sumatra and the offshore island of Bangka, five refer to military conquests either completed or planned. And the one eyewitness description of early Śrīvijaya, from the pen of the Chinese traveler I-Ching, appears to incorporate oblique references to the expansion of Śrīvijayan power.

I-CHING AND THE IMPERIAL AND CULTURAL EXTENSIONS OF SRIVIJAYA

Because so much of our information about early Śrīvijaya comes from his travel account, we should say something about I-Ching and then examine the implications of his account for our interpretation of the structure of "Greater" Śrīvijaya.¹⁴ His

character and preoccupations, after all, determined his choice of what to record and how he perceived what he did describe. He was a Buddhist monk from T'ang China, imbued with the Buddhist reverence for places sacred to the memory of the Buddha and with the Chinese respect for the written word. In 671 A.D., he arrived in Śrīvijaya enroute from Canton to the great north Indian monastic center at Nālandā. The principal purpose of his trip was to obtain accurate details concerning the correct Vināya rules governing monastic discipline and behavior, about which there was some confusion among Buddhist sects in China. Therefore, I-Ching's account is not only oriented toward questions relevant to his priestly subculture, but is overwhelmingly preoccupied with one of those questions, the issue of monastic organization. His account is freighted with detailed descriptions of monastic rules and behavior in Śrīvijaya and India, and we must glean the political and geographical information we seek from brief and often ambiguous remarks concerning his itinerary.

But the very fact that he was able to write his account in that way is revealing. It is significant that he discovered in Śrīvijaya a large monastic community consisting of a thousand monks—probably an exaggerated figure—engaged in scholarship, and that he stayed in their company for about six months, learning Sanskrit and living largely oblivious to the hurly-burly of the marketplace. He obviously considered the scholarship and discipline of that community to be of high quality. Even after he had compared it to his experience in Nālandā, he advised all Chinese pilgrims bound for India to study in Śrīvijaya for two years on the way. This advice implies that Śrīvijaya's Buddhism was not greatly compromised by local culture and practices and was in harmony with Indian monasticism as practiced at Nālandā.¹⁵

Furthermore, the existence of such a large monastic community engaged in activities having no economically productive or marketing function is a measure of Śrīvijaya's prosperity, for this leisure class was necessarily maintained out of the profits of trade. The size of the monastic community is also a tribute to the persistent patronage of its rulers, for which we have other evidence. An Old Malay inscription from Talang Tuwo, west of Palembang, records the foundation by order of King Śrī Jayanāsa in A.D. 684 of a park named Śrīkṣetra, dedicated to Buddhist principles.¹⁶

The Ligor inscription, to be discussed later, records the foundation by a Śrīvijayan king of a monastic complex on the east coast of the Malay peninsula about a century later.¹⁷

It is likely that this patronage was undertaken partly with an eye toward the contribution which the institutional structure of Buddhist monasticism could make to Śrīvijaya's political and commercial aspirations. The spiritual dialogue between monastic centers in the various ports under the hegemony of Śrīvijaya, and the flow of monks between them, would certainly have helped to bind those settlements together and to mitigate to some extent the centrifugal tendencies resulting from trade rivalries. Moreover, Buddhism may well have performed an analogous function in the larger realm of diplomatic relations. That is, Buddhism provided Śrīvijaya with a useful set of concepts and pious phrases through which the state could carry on commercial diplomacy, if I may use that phrase. Modern states are accustomed to a world in which international relations are carried on largely in the formalistic idiom of modern diplomacy. Early Asian states had no such legalistic language, but spoke instead in the idiom of high ethical and moral values. The diplomatic side of trade served to clothe commercial interests in the garb of ethical precepts.

Thus Buddhism elevated Śrīvijaya's relations with India and China above the level of mere commerce. It expressed interstate relations in the only idiom of piety which India and China had in common. For Śrīvijaya, situated halfway between China and India and in contact with both, Buddhism served as a cultural common denominator for dealing with each of them. The hospitality accorded to Chinese monks in Śrīvijaya suggests that its rulers were not unaware of their realm's significant cultural, as well as geographical, position between India and China. Similarly, the efforts by Śrīvijayan rulers to construct Buddhist *viharas* in India was not only an act of piety, but also a diplomatic gesture. However, the fact that such patronage was not strictly confined to Buddhism is illustrated by the Śrīvijayan inscription of Canton, written in Chinese, which indicates that in 1079 A.D., the ruler of Śrīvijaya purchased rice fields with which to endow a Taoist temple! The information preserved in this remarkable record presents some serious problems of interpretation—not the least of which is its identification of the Chōlja (*Chu Lien*) country as a vassal of

Srivijaya—but it clearly shows a strong connection between commercial diplomacy and religion.¹⁸

But that relates to the eleventh century, and we are still discussing the seventh. (We shall return to the Canton inscription in the next chapter.) I-Ching visited the Srivijayan capital at a time of military expansion as well as cultural efflorescence. After proceeding to India, he spent about a decade at Nālandā, collecting and studying accurate texts of the *Tripitika*. He returned to Srivijaya in 685 A.D. by way of Sri Lanka and then spent several years in Srivijaya translating texts into Chinese. A cryptic remark concerning one portion of his itinerary is probably a reference to Palembang's imperial expansion, or at least is generally interpreted to mean that. On his way to and from India, I-Ching passed through Malāyu. On the return trip he observed that Malāyu is "now changed to Srivijaya."¹⁹ The precise meaning of this curious remark has been much debated by scholars, but still eludes precise definition. The most likely meaning is that Srivijaya/Palembang had absorbed Malāyu some time in the early 680s. The Old Malay inscriptions of Srivijaya, which fall into precisely this (683–686 A.D.) period, make it clear that I-Ching's visit did coincide with a period of military expansion, although I-Ching had scant interest in it.

Three of the published inscriptions (those of Karang Brahi, Kota Kapur, and Telaga Batu) appear to be identical versions of a single public proclamation which originally may have been simultaneously erected at many places, but only a few copies have survived, and those not wholly intact. The one from Telaga Batu, near Palembang, is only a fragment. The version from Karang Brahi, located on a tributary of the Batang river, on which Malāyu flourished, is not completely legible and the date cannot be read. But the text is almost certainly the same as that of the inscription of Kota Kapur, from the island of Bangka, off the coast of Sumatra directly opposite the mouth of the Musi river. The Kota Kapur inscription is dated 608 Śaka, or 686 A.D. These inscriptions are public warnings in the form of oaths which invoke ritual magic to protect Srivijaya from insurrections against royal authority while the army carried out an impending attack upon "the land of Java which had not submitted to Srivijaya."²⁰ Plotters resorting to poisons, formulas, or philtres would have their wicked acts recoil

upon them, and all rebels would be struck dead. A similar text has been discovered recently at Palas Pasemah, near the Sunda strait, but is as yet unpublished.²¹

These inscriptions are interesting for several reasons. First, they indicate the existence of an expanding state in southeastern Sumatra. The momentum of its conquests were carrying it against the neighboring island of Java—with what success we do not know. If we assume that the find-spots of these records are also their original locations, then we can infer that Malāyu, Bangka island, and Palembang were all component parts of a small empire and that their ruler feared mischief if he withdrew his forces in order to carry out an expedition against Java.²² The tone of these records reveals that the kings of Srivijaya relied strongly upon the "intangible" sources of power to supplement mere physical force.

The fact that I-Ching's account and the Old Malay inscriptions all fall into the 670s and 680s means that we know something specific about that period of Srivijaya's growth, but we are left without much information concerning the following decades, except for notices of so-called tribute missions to China, which continued until 742. Then, inexplicably, *Fo-shih* disappears from the tribute lists and does not reappear until the tenth century. R. F. Smith has recently called attention to the sharp decline in the number of missions from Southeast Asia between the first half of the seventh century and the last half of the eighth century. He suggests that this sharp drop may have been related, at least in part, to a tendency toward gradual political integration in Southeast Asia, with the result that a small number of major centers became dominant over the rest. The trouble with that thesis, as far as Srivijaya is concerned, is that it, too, disappears from the tribute lists along with the states which it presumably dominated.²³

Historians have generally argued that beginning in the late seventh century, the power of Srivijaya expanded until it controlled a sizable maritime empire. Yet few authors have stopped to consider the implications of applying the term "empire" to a series of ports, or about what we would be forced to assume concerning the control system which held them together. Effective control of that empire from a single center would have required an elaborate military or perhaps even bureaucratic control system for which our sources do not give sufficient evidence. (We cannot

take seriously the epigraphical assertions regarding two thousand foot-soldiers, nor can we infer very much from literal translations of administrative titles, although historians have resorted to both of these devices.)

The same difficulty arises when we consider the question of control over merchant shipping. The control which the Śrīvijayan empire is generally believed to have acquired over the flow of shipping through the Strait of Malacca has been regarded as part of the *raison d'être* of that empire by many writers. This interpretation is founded largely upon a detailed description by Chau Ju-kua, a thirteenth century Chinese Inspector of Maritime Customs at Canton :

This country, lying in the ocean and controlling the straits through which the foreigners' sea and land traffic in either direction must pass, in olden times used an iron chain as a barrier to keep the pirates of other countries in check. It could be kept up or lowered by a cunning device. If a merchant ship arrived it was lowered. After a number of years of peace, during which there has been no use for it, it has been removed and (now) lies coiled upon the shore. The natives reverence it like a Buddha, and vessels coming there sacrifice to it. When rubbed with oil it shines like new. Crocodiles do not dare pass over it to do mischief. If a merchant ship passes by without entering, their boats go forth and make a combined attack, and all are ready to die (in the attempt). This is the reason why this country is a great shipping centre.²⁴

We have here a plausible picture of the arrangement by which a port could be protected from the intrusion of pirates by using a barrier of chains—and perhaps logs, although Chau Ju-kua does not say so—and used force to control the passage of shipping. But if following this description, we say that ships were forced to put in at Śrīvijaya, the question arises : Which "Śrīvijaya" are we talking about, a single port or an empire? It is by no means clear that Chau Ju-kua's description of *San-fo-tsi* is a description of Palembang, Malāyu, or any other single place. Incidentally, Palembang is today located some seventy-five miles up the winding Musi river, and in Śrīvijaya's heyday was several days' sailing

from the Malacca strait, so it was not ideally situated to intercept shipping. The degree to which the Sumatran coast has altered during historic times, and ports may have moved due to geomorphic processes such as sea level changes and tectonic activity, is a subject of current debate.²⁵ If silting of the Musi river has notably extended the river and adjacent coastline from its configuration in the seventh century, then Palembang would at least have been closer to the coast. However, such a change remains to be demonstrated, and it is not clear whether that would have altered the situation. In any case, even though Chau Ju-kua's description seems to apply to one harbor, he appears to be using "Śrīvijaya" in the imperial sense, because immediately after the above passage, he proceeds to list some fifteen of its dependencies, including *Pa-lin-fong*, i. e., Palembang.

It would be difficult to maintain that all international shipping was forced to put in at one port and no others because this flies in the face of the Chinese and Arab accounts. Indeed, it is hard to see why such a control measure would have been necessary, if the king of Śrīvijaya received tribute as his share of the customs duties and other profits from the subordinate ports. The periodicity of the monsoons required ships to wait for a change of wind anyway, and even those ships sailing along the coast naturally required frequent provisioning, especially fresh water. Force, then, would only have been applied either to (1) bring into Palembang or another port all passing ships regardless of what other port or ports they entered, or (2) to force shipping into one or another of the ports which constituted the Śrīvijayan empire precisely because those ports did *not* constitute all of the possible ports of call. It is not possible to demonstrate in any rigorous fashion that the second alternative is the correct one, but I believe that it makes more sense. At least, we should not assume that the ruler of Śrīvijaya had an iron grip on all maritime commerce and that the network of ports under his domination or influence were necessarily controlled in any rigorous fashion.

These structural questions have now been complicated by the surprising outcome of the Palembang excavations undertaken by the National Archaeological Institute of Indonesia and the University of Pennsylvania Museum in 1974. The results have been succinctly described and thoughtfully analyzed by Bennet

Bronson and Jan Wisseman in *Asian Perspectives*.²⁶ I can only summarize their discussion, but it is of profound importance for our understanding of Śrīvijaya. As part of an effort to discover evidence of early urbanization in island Southeast Asia comparable to the citylike settlements assignable to the first millennium A.D. that seem to abound on the mainland—more than fifty have been discovered in central Thailand alone—but are hard to locate in the islands, except for Java, the archaeologists investigated Palembang, where they expected to find artifacts from the capital of “the most solidly authenticated first millennium state between Indonesia and India.”²⁷ They were not concerned about demonstrating that any first millennium settlement there was really the Śrīvijayan capital, since *any* substantial urban settlement of that period would be an important discovery.

The results were disconcerting. Test pits were dug at four locations, including the hill known as Bukit Seguntang, just west of the city, where an extensive Buddhist monastic complex of uncertain date had once stood. Although numerous artifacts were unearthed, none proved to be very old, and the imported Ceramics, from China and various parts of Southeast Asia, turned out to be mostly sixteenth and seventeenth century items. Evidence was found for the existence of two settlements in the vicinity of Palembang, namely a town of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries at Air Bersih and another settlement of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries at Geding Suro. Most other activity in the Palembang area during the “Hindu-Buddhist” period appears to have revolved around those two settlements. The excavators found a mere handful of Sung dynasty stonewares and porcelains, perhaps heirlooms, although enormous quantities of such goods have been found at virtually every tenth to thirteenth century site elsewhere in Southeast Asia. The evidence from Bukit Seguntang also proved to be scant, lending little support to identification of that site with the large monastic community described by I-Ching. Aside from the seventh century Old Malay inscriptions and statues, there is absolutely no evidence of occupation in the vicinity of Palembang during the first millennium A.D. The excavators were “forced to conclude that Śrīvijaya in all except the very last stages of its existence was not in or near Palembang and probably not anywhere in the area drained by the Musi River. As for the 7th

century inscriptions and 6th-10th century statues, we believe that all of these are present because they were brought in from somewhere else during the 14th-17th centuries.”²⁸ They add:

Śrīvijaya at Palembang, it should be reemphasized, was the sole example of an identifiable early urban place anywhere in the region south of the Thai-Malaysian border. With it gone, we have no examples at all, and so the contrast between South and North becomes very striking indeed. Archaeologically identifiable urbanization in the former area seems to lag more than a thousand years behind the latter, even though the South is as rich in natural resources, inhabited by a population as technologically advanced in late prehistoric times, and at least as well placed to receive the presumed stimulus of long-distance commerce and contact with more developed parts of the world.²⁹

If the contrast between North and South is real, not just a reflection of a neglect of excavation in the islands—and it is hard to believe that lack of excavation alone could account for such an apparently sharp contrast—then the historical sources are flatly contradicted and Chinese accounts which describe citylike entities along the sea route between China and India during the first millennium A.D. must be merely fantastic travellers’ tales. Such a conclusion, Bronson and Wisseman observe, is equally difficult to accept.

Instead, they suggest, we should give further thought to what is meant by a “city” in this environment and consider whether a settlement possessing certain specific characteristics might look impressively urban to a contemporary visitor like I-Ching but leave few traces for the archaeologist. Such a settlement would have to exist in comparative isolation from its hinterland (as did fifteenth century Malacca, which subsisted on supplies shipped from as far away as Java and Thailand), and also have access to easy transportation and major maritime trade routes. Furthermore, the settlement would have to be organized politically in such a way as to dispense with large, durable ceremonial centers such as those which were created in Cambodia and Java, and it would have to be built flimsily, perhaps on rafts or pilings over the water so that even domestic and industrial waste would not accumulate to be

discovered by the archaeologist. In short, it may be that searches for wet rice-based, ceremonially focused, *enciente*-surrounded urban sites of the kind that are well known on the mainland will be doomed to failure because urban centers in the islands were radically different in their characteristics.

In another article, Bronson has developed a hypothetical model of what he believes to be the typical coastal state, really a commercial city-state.³⁰ Such a coastal state is located near the mouth of a major river, controlling access to the sea and thereby mediating between upstream centers of exchange in its hinterland and the larger network of maritime trade. Its population is small, its hinterland infertile and little cultivated. It depends upon trade for its prosperity. It is in commercial competition with similar coastal centers and will flourish or decline in direct relation to the effectiveness of that competition, which readily takes the form of armed conflict, so it can be expected to rise and fall rapidly. Unlike the capitals of agrarian states, which tend to persist through institutional inertia, river-mouth centers are impermanent and insubstantial, and can disappear virtually overnight. "Indeed", Bronson remarks, "river-mouth city states, some spectacular in their heyday but all evanescent, seem the general rule everywhere south of Thailand and outside of Java."³¹ The strength of such a center rests greatly on the personal prestige and patronage of its ruler. Success in aspiring to coastal hegemony depends on his "personal magnetism" and ability to encourage defections by supporters of rival leaders.

Part of the interest of this model lies in its relevance to a premise of the present study, namely that persistent military activity and imperial expansion must be understood in relation to the institutional structure of the state. Bronson makes the particularly interesting suggestion that for such coastal states, wars of conquest and even "extermination" are not only predictable, but actually make better economic sense than they would for an inland kingdom because the cost-benefit ratio is more favorable. In other words, to conquer a rival coastal center and profit from its commerce, a coastal state need only seize the rival river-mouth settlement, not its hinterland, in order to dominate the commerce of its entire drainage basin.³²

Although Bronson describes his model as hypothetical, he

obviously has Sumatra very much in mind. And if we accept the conventional view that the heartland of Śrīvijaya was somewhere in Sumatra throughout the "age of Śrīvijaya," regardless of whether the capital was at Palembang or Malāyu or elsewhere at any particular moment, the model gives us a much clearer idea of what that political system was like and why it has left few archaeological traces. As an empire, Śrīvijaya was very likely a kaleidoscopic configuration of settlements. Its continuity from the seventh until perhaps the late fourteenth century resided in a name, a concept, an ideal, a dream of Malay greatness. Śrīvijaya generated an illusion of continuity because a succession of ports and rulers aspired to its name and splendor, just as the early Muslim sultans of Malacca, even in the fifteenth century, still sought to draw strength from its lingering memory.

Still, Bronson's model has its limitations. When we try to apply it to more distant parts of Śrīvijaya's alleged empire—the smaller islands north of Sumatra, or the peninsular settlements—it doesn't explain enough. As O. W. Wolters has emphasized (in his second book, *The Fall of Śrīvijaya in Malay History*, written prior to 1974, when he was still confident that Palembang was the Śrīvijayan capital at least until the late eleventh century), Śrīvijaya's dependencies, although all located close to the sea, were rather diverse in character. Those on the northern coast of Sumatra, such as Lamuri, enjoyed access to rich natural resources in the interior, and were "restless vassals" of the mahārāja.³³ This type of dependency is quite compatible with Bronson's model. But another type of dependency, according to Wolters, consisted of the numerous islands between the Malay peninsula and the east coast of Sumatra, of which the largest were in the Riau and Lingga archipelagoes, plus a portion of Sumatra's southeastern coast as well. This region comprised an environment of mangroves and, in the islands, coral reefs, a distinctive ecological niche which had been occupied by various Malay chiefs and their hardy followers. This was the world of sea-nomads, fishermen, pirates. Here were numerous centers of "quasi-independent" power. None controlled a drainage basin. Finally, and least typical of Śrīvijaya's dependencies, were the peninsular communities, some of them settlements of great antiquity. There, says Wolters, the Malay character of the Śrīvijayan state was "blurred" by a Mon-Khmer

cultural environment—perhaps a major understatement.

Now, even if all these diverse and far-flung settlements were really under the hegemony of a single port in Sumatra, and I think there is good reason to doubt that they were, it is quite out of the question that its ruler could have exercised day-to-day control over such distant places. There would necessarily have been some degree of voluntarism and federation, some positive benefit of affiliation, even beyond trade advantages in China, to hold that tenuous system together.

Wolters is the only writer who has devoted much thought to this issue. He pictures the mahārājas as generous dispensers of wealth and honors to the Malay chiefs, whose "chief compensation was found in official service in the great capital city, where the court was staffed on an impressive scale and required high dignitaries to perform important ceremonies and duties."³⁴ He imagines the chiefs eagerly abandoning their less exciting bases to enjoy honorable and lucrative posts at court. Thus the wealth and splendor of the court itself held the system together. (In spite of his references to local centers of power, Wolters seems to attribute a high degree of centrality, as well as stability and continuity, to Śrīvijaya.) A generous dispensation of wealth and honors secured the loyalty of the Malay chiefs, but Wolters believes that material benefits were the least prized of the rewards. Honors, precedence, these were greater. There are obvious parallels here with practices in the European and Indian states which we have already considered. But even if this rather imaginative reconstruction of life at the Śrīvijayan court is essentially correct, it scarcely explains how the rulers could have exercised a similar control over the most distant dependencies in the peninsula, where the non-Malays might not have been as susceptible to such blandishments.

PENINSULAR DEPENDENCIES : HOW DEPENDENT WERE THEY?

When we turn our attention to Śrīvijaya's dependencies in the Malay peninsula and try to assess the degree to which they could have been controlled from Sumatra, we are again confronted by a difficulty, for virtually the only solid evidence for their subordination to Śrīvijaya is literary, whereas the archaeological and artistic evidence underscores the peninsula's Indian, Chinese, and Khmer commercial and cultural affiliations, rather than any clear Sumatran

connection. For example, as art historian Stanley J. O'Connor has pointed out, much of the isthmian art currently described as "Śrīvijayan" is really a late "international" Buddhist art with close affinities to Bihar and Bengal under the Pāla and Sena dynasties.³⁵

Again, this discrepancy between literary and other evidence may simply reflect the limited archaeological investigation undertaken to date in the peninsula, as well as the preoccupations of earlier investigators. H. G. Q. Wales, for example, spent many years engaged in a romantic search for routes of India's eastward "expansion," not for traces of Śrīvijaya. But I suspect that as excavations continue, the whole concept of a half-millennium or longer Śrīvijayan period will increasingly appear to be an awkward category into which to fit the peninsular evidence.

The farther north we look in the Malay peninsula, the more difficult it is to identify states which were integral parts of the Śrīvijayan empire. Did it have a northern "frontier" in any sense? Paul Wheatley, referring to the period 1000–1300 A.D., identifies the northern limit of Śrīvijayan control as somewhere in the neighborhood of Chumphon (C'ump'on), just north of the Kra isthmus.³⁶ Similarly, the compilers of the recent and authoritative *Historical Atlas of South Asia*, who have courageously included early Southeast Asia in their project, suggest in connection with the maps covering the period 650–1250, on page 36, that the Malay peninsula was divided into "persistent spheres of influence of Khmers and Śrīvijaya north and south of the Kra Isthmus respectively." Plate IV. 6b in that volume delineates their areas of maximum control.

My own figure 6, which indicates the area of Śrīvijayan hegemony, shows what impression is conveyed by that interpretation of the evidence. It represents what I would characterize as a rather conventional view of Śrīvijaya's expansion, although of course it does not pretend to indicate the extent of Śrīvijaya's imperial control, or "influence," at any particular moment in time. Nor, of course, does it indicate the ambiguity of the relevant evidence or differences of scholarly opinion regarding its interpretation.

Since such a large maritime empire would have encompassed a number of preexisting city-states, it might be appropriate to suggest which ones would have been incorporated, if indeed Śrīvijayan

authority had extended so far. The reader should bear in mind that specialists in historical geography have expended an impressive amount of effort in trying to reconstruct the names of the Indianized states mentioned in the Chinese records and to locate those states on the peninsula. Some of them can be readily identified, others are the subject of debate, and still others utterly resist identification. The following description, based for the most part on Paul Wheatley's impressive analysis in *The Golden Khersonese*, is intentionally abbreviated, since we are more concerned with questions of state structure than with the complexities of historical geography. Minor places, including a few which are mentioned in Chinese accounts but cannot be located very precisely, are omitted from this discussion.

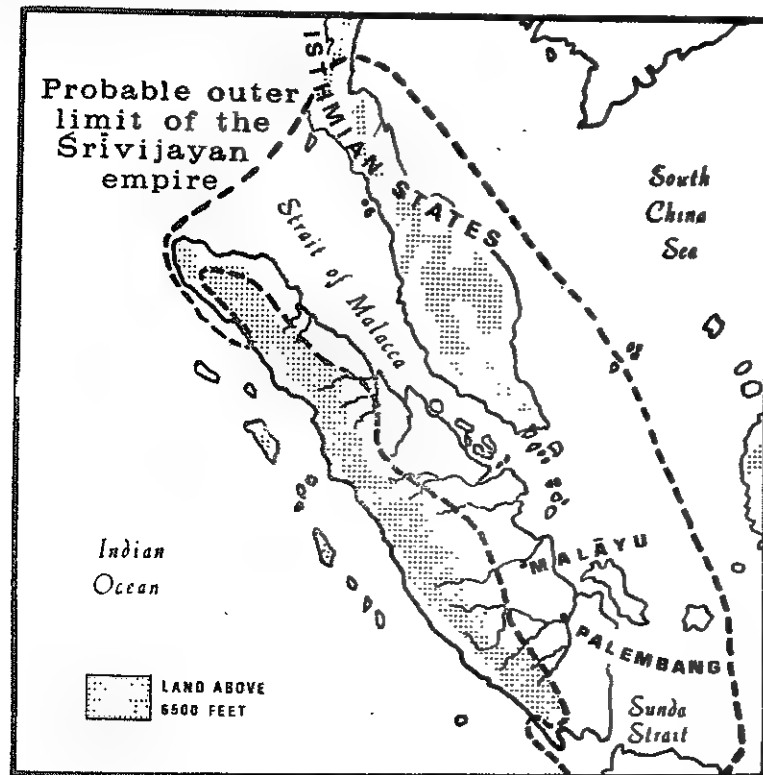


Figure 6: Outer limit of Srivijayan Hegemony, According to Conventional Historical Interpretation

Figure 7 indicates the names and locations of the major Indianized states of the peninsula, as best they can be identified from the toponyms which appear in the Chinese sources. In some cases the Chinese name is the only one available to us; one such is the name of the northernmost state on the east coast, *P'an-p'an*. It is described in the encyclopedia *Wen-hsien T'ung-k'ao*, compiled by Ma-Tuan-lin, as having a settlement with palisaded walls and numerous Brahmans and Buddhist monks.³⁷ Although this state was featured prominently in Chinese records after the fifth century A.D., I-Ching failed to mention it in his seventh century account, presumably because he and his fellow pilgrims did not touch on that particular stretch of coast.

Farther south, along the stretch of coast from the turning of the Bay of Bandon down to at least present-day Nakhon Si Thammarat (*Skt.* Nagara Śrī Dharmarāja), was the isthmian state of Tāmbraḷiṅga (*Tan-ma-ling*), which could be reached overland by an isthmian portage route from Takuapa, on the west coast. Although Tāmbraḷiṅga disappears from contemporary records in the early Srivijayan period—possibly because it was incorporated in *P'an-p'an*, suggests Wheatley³⁸—it reappears in the eleventh century and is mentioned in the Tanjore inscription as *Madama-liṅgam*. It encompassed Ligor, so we know that the *majārāja* of Srivijaya had at least an interest in this area around 775 A.D., the date of the Ligor inscription. Chau Ju-kua lists it as a dependency of Srivijaya, adding that it collects whatever gold and silver vessels it receives and presents them to *San-fo-ch'i*, presumably as tribute.³⁹ According to Wheatley, Tāmbraḷiṅga managed to "secede" from the Srivijayan empire in the thirteenth century and to become an expansionist state in its own right.⁴⁰

Still farther south, beyond Songkhla in the vicinity of modern Patani—according to Wheatley's reading of the evidence—was an important stopping-place on the coastal sailing route, namely Langkasuka (*Lang-ya-hsiu* and variant orthographies, including I-Ching's *Lang-chia-shu*). The Chinese knew it as a source of the finest gharuwood and camphor. Like *P'an-p'an*, it had once been a satellite of Funan, but in the sixth century, with the political eclipse of Funan, it had emerged as an independent state. But unlike *P'an-p'an*, it is generally regarded as subsequently having become a vassal state of Srivijaya. Chau Ju-kua's account identifies

it as such, along with perhaps eight other peninsular states, not all of which can be precisely located, however.

There were several minor states south of Langkasuka, and hence beyond the isthmian region, which are known from Chinese accounts but cannot be pinpointed, if indeed all were actually in that vicinity. Those names, known from accounts of the T'ang dynasty, include *Tan-tan*, *Ko-lo*, and *Lo-yüeh*, the latter located in the southernmost part of the Malay peninsula. By the time of

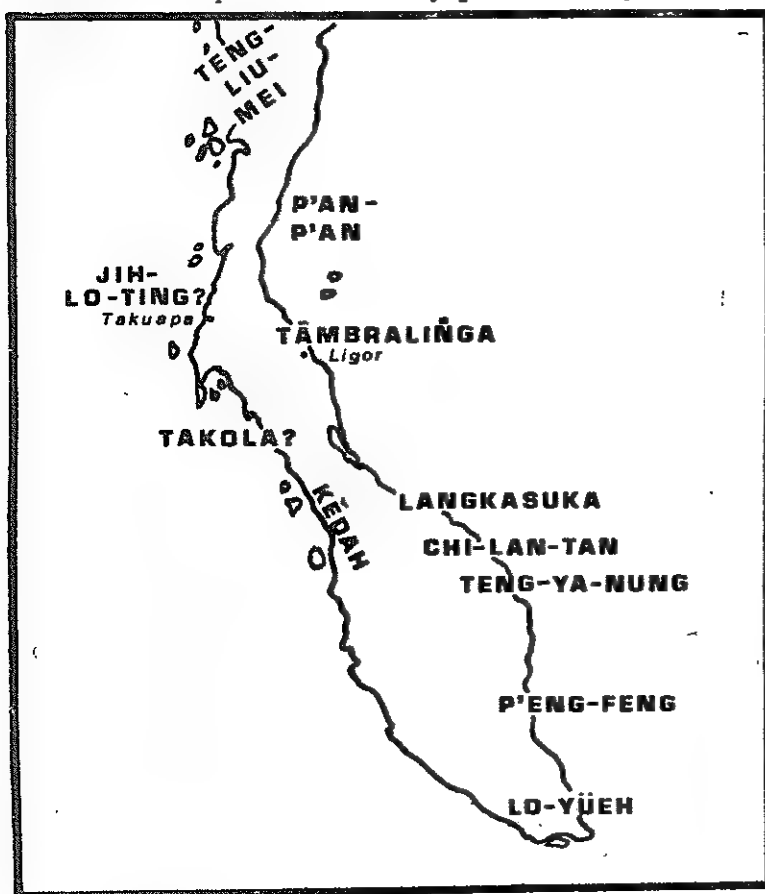


Figure 7: Major Indianized States of the Malay Peninsula (adapted from Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*)

Chau Ju-kua, however, other toponyms appear, some of them readily identifiable with modern place-names: *Chi-lan-tan* or Kelantan, *Tang-ya-nung* or Trengganu, and *P'eng-feng* or Pahang. All are mentioned by Chau Ju-kua as dependencies of Śrīvijaya.

Also in that vicinity but curiously difficult to locate is the port of *Fo-lo-an*, a dependency of Śrīvijaya which is ranked by Chau Ju-kua along with *San-fo-ch'i* (Śrīvijaya) as the two chief entrepôts for Southeast Asian products. Wheatley suggests Kuala Berang, on the Trengganu river, as its location. (Not shown on my map.) Chau Ju-kua provides a long list of the commodities of *Fo-lo-an*, notes the annual tribute it paid to *San-fo-ch'i*, and comments on the splendor of the local Buddhist temples. Pirate ships are said to be driven away by contrary winds attributed to the Buddhas, and foreign merchants are said to participate in the annual celebrations of the Buddha's birthday.⁴¹ It is not difficult to see in these references to the flourishing condition of Mahāyāna Buddhism a reflection of ongoing and lavish official Śrīvijayan patronage.

The Chinese sources provide less information about the west coast of the peninsula than the east, but Indian, Arab and other accounts provide some assistance. The northernmost part of the peninsula, beyond Śrīvijaya's presumed sphere of influence or control, was the location of a state known to the Chinese as *Teng-liu-mei*, described by Chau Ju-kua as a dependency of Cambodia (*Chen-la*). But to the south of *Teng-liu-mei* was *Jih-lo-t'ing*, mentioned in the Tanjore inscription as *Mayirudīṅgam* and characterized by Chau Ju-kua as one of Śrīvijaya's dependencies. Unfortunately, we lack sufficient information to locate either state precisely, but I have suggested approximate locations in Figure 7.

One west coast entrepôt which has attracted the attention of historians and archaeologists alike is Takuapa, where a Tamil inscription of perhaps the ninth century (dated on palaeographic grounds), found in association with the so-called Pra Narain group of Śaivite sculptures near the Takuapa river, attests to the presence there of south Indian *manigramam* (here, *maṇikkiramam*) merchants during the Śrīvijayan period.⁴² That is not surprising, since as we noted earlier, it was located at the western end of a trans-isthmian route. The river estuary would also have provided an excellent anchorage for shipping, protected by Kakao island from the rough waters offshore.

As Alastair Lamb has pointed out, these particular artifacts, unlike so many antiquities of the peninsula which too hastily have been labeled as "Indian" rather than "Indianized," clearly are of Indian origin and do attest to the presence of Indians at that location. The inscription commemorates the construction of a temple tank and its protection by Indian soldiers. The record implies the presence of a fairly stable settlement of south Indian merchants and the utilization of their own troops. Professor Nilakanta Sastri suggested that Pallava political control of this area might be implied, but that suggestion has not won general acceptance. What the evidence does indicate, however, is vigorous south Indian commercial involvement in the peninsula, and Lamb has hypothesized the existence of a trading settlement analogous to the European "factories" of a later age.⁴³ While none of the Takuapa evidence is incompatible with a theory of Srivijayan hegemony in the area, neither does it provide any confirmation.

Another place which has attracted scholarly attention is the ancient emporium of Takola, as it was known in Ptolemy's *Geography*, or as *Takkola* in the *Milinda-pañha*, or the *Talaittak-kōlam* of the Tanjore inscription. Although its location has been the subject of considerable scholarly discussion and has evoked widely divergent suggestions (including Takuapa), it must have been an entrepot of some importance to have survived from at least the third through the eleventh centuries A.D. It was probably on the west coast of the peninsula, at or near one of the portage routes. Wheatley, among others, has suggested a location in the vicinity of Trang, where the river of the same name provided a convenient route across the isthmus. (But can a site so far inland really be regarded as an "entrepot" in the usual sense?) Although Trang is located far south of the Isthmus of Kra, the presumed northern boundary of Srivijayan influence, we have no specific evidence to indicate that Takola was one of the dependencies of Srivijaya.⁴⁴

When we move from southern Thailand down to the Kedah district of West Malaysia, we find ourselves in a region which was clearly of great commercial importance in the Srivijayan period—so much so, in fact, that the Chōjas seem to have been under the impression that the most important king of the island world ruled from there, or at least that its ruler was a powerful sovereign in his own right, since the king of Kaḍāram is the ruler who is

singled out for identification in the Tanjore inscription. In light of our earlier comments about the peculiar structural characteristics of Srivijaya, the possibility of Kedah's relative autonomy should not be lightly dismissed.

The Kedah region, located on the stretch of coast where voyagers from the Coromandel coast heading for the Strait of Malacca could be expected to make their first landfall, attracted Indian commerce centuries before the rise of Srivijaya. It was strategically situated for the return voyage as well. Literary sources indicate that Kedah—probably the estuary of the Merbok river in particular—became an important gathering place for vessels awaiting the onset of the monsoon for the trip across the Bay of Bengal. Kedah appears under a variety of toponyms in Indian literature (Skt. *Kaṭāha*, Tam. *Kaḍāram* or *Kiḍāram* and perhaps even *Kalagam*) and most often as *Chieh-ch'a* in itineraries of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims of the seventh century.⁴⁵ When I-Ching passed that way enroute to India, he sailed from *Mo-lo-yu* (Malāyu) to *Chieh-ch'a* (Kedah), from which place—after waiting for the onset of the northeast monsoon—he went "in the King's ship" (which king?) to the Nicobar islands and thence to Tāmraliptī. It is evident, from incidental references in I-Ching's memoirs to the routes taken by perhaps three dozen other Chinese Buddhists who also went to India by sea in this period (others went by land), that an alternative sailing route led from the Nicobars to either northern Sri Lanka or Nāgapattinam. Therefore all of those destinations normally could be reached from Kedah. Kedah retained its importance until at least the time of Rājendra's raid, of which it appears to have been a prime objective, but Kedah fades rapidly from the historical record thereafter. Its name does not even appear among the places identified by Chau Ju-kua as dependencies of Srivijaya in the thirteenth century.

Another toponym which has sometimes been identified with Kedah is the *Kalah* of Arab accounts. By the tenth century, Arab writers were aware of *Kalah*, thought of as situated halfway between Arabia and China. They commonly described it as a dependency of a more powerful state but did not always agree on the identity of that hegemon.⁴⁶ In the early tenth century, Abū Zaid was describing it as a possession of the king of *al-Zabaj*; but Abū-Dalaf, writing at mid-century, described it as a vassal of

China.⁴⁷ *Sribuza* seems to have been the Arab equivalent of *Srivijaya* (Palembang?), and it and *Kalah* were often subsumed under the empire of *Zabaj*, perhaps roughly equivalent to what I have called "Greater" *Srivijaya*, the maritime empire. However, *Zabaj* was such a nebulous entity that it appears to have represented, in the minds of some writers, the entire island world. By contrast, the dualism of *Sribuza* and *Kalah* in Arab sources seems to echo the *Srivijaya-Kadaram* of Chola perception. *Kalah* was certainly located on the west coast of the Malay peninsula, although controversy over its precise location continues and is unlikely to abate in the near future.

Because the sources are often contradictory, identifying the location of *Kalah* depends partly upon which combination of sources is regarded as most trustworthy, and this too is a matter of debate. S. Q. Fatimi, in an analysis based upon Arabic texts alone, identifies *Kalah* with the Klang area.⁴⁸ No doubt archaeological as well as literary evidence will be required for any future resolution of the issue. Citing relevant artifacts, Alastair Lamb has identified two possible spots which could have been *Kalah*, namely Pangkalan Bujang in Kedah and Kakhao island near Takuapa in southern Thailand.⁴⁹ Lamb suggests that *Kalah* may not refer to a fixed point at all, but rather—and here I adapt Lamb's argument to my own terminology—to a stretch of coast where the dominant port (*Kalah*) migrated along that shore as one place assumed the dominant role of another.⁵⁰

None of this literary evidence constitutes very convincing evidence for the effective integration of Kedah into the *Srivijayan* empire. In fact, the evidence for Kedah's subordination to Sumatran control is so sparse that some writers, such as Wheatley, have been inclined to describe Kedah and Palembang as "twin foci" of the *Srivijayan* empire, dual commercial (and political?) centers on opposite shores and at opposite ends of the Strait of Malacca. But since in discussing *Srivijaya* we are trying to generalize about a period of a half-millennium or more, I suspect that the reality was far more complex than that.

What light is shed on Kedah and other peninsular settlements in the *Srivijayan* period by the archaeological evidence? As far as Kedah is concerned, most of the findings have been assessed in terms of trying to determine the degree of "Indianization" of the

area; but I believe that those findings also have implications for the study of *Srivijaya*, even though that issue has not been directly addressed by the archaeologists. The reason for this relevance is that recent assessments of the Kedah evidence place much more emphasis on its indigenous character, and hence on a greater degree of political and cultural autonomy, than was suggested by earlier writers such as Wales and Lamb.

The artifacts certainly support an argument for a lively and continuing international commerce. Recent studies of pottery fragments indicate that there was a local Kedah Red Ware of unsophisticated type, probably intended for domestic use. But evidence of a wide variety of imported wares, including Khmer pots, Chinese celadons, and Arab glass, is so abundant that the ready availability of such superior imports may have inhibited a more sophisticated evolution of the local ceramic industry.⁵¹ In any case, there was clearly a lively import trade.

Much more scholarly attention has been devoted, over a period of several decades, to various monumental antiquities in Kedah, both Buddhist and Saivite, which have generally been characterized as "Indian" shrines or temples and interpreted as evidence of Indian settlement. Most of these monuments are scattered along the valley of the Bujang river, a tributary of the Merbok.⁵² One distinctive feature of these rather small monuments is that they were not constructed wholly of stone, unlike their presumed Indian prototypes. Only the stone base, or platform, of each one survives, the upper portion—presumably made of wood—having disappeared.

Janice Stargardt, who in 1971 undertook test excavations in the Bujang valley and attempted a reassessment of previously-described sites there, concludes that contrary to what earlier authors have suggested, the evidence does not support a theory of Hindu communities in the Bujang valley or of Hindu colonization of the area. Instead, both Hindu and Buddhist traditions were employed "selectively" and for a "limited" (elite?) rather than a popular purpose. She argues that the Kedah monuments were probably not village temples at all, since the grouping of them in clusters suggests instead a series of "royal funeral temples" of the kind known from other parts of Southeast Asia. She remarks:

The evidence does indicate that the Kedah communities enjoyed a measure of prosperity bringing them commercial

contacts from a wide geographical area. They produced a series of monumental structures in which, it may be supposed, the power of their rulers was consecrated and preserved.⁵³

The clear implication is that in the Kedah region there was a local political elite of some power and affluence, and that it was able to make selective use of Indian elements for purposes of self-aggrandizement.⁵⁴ I would add that although these modest structures do not bear comparison with the impressive monuments of, say, Angkor, they still constitute more abundant monumental remains than have been discovered in the vicinity of Palembang. If one were to judge on the basis of monumental evidence alone, it would be easy to conclude that Kedah was politically the more important of the two areas.

Among recent archaeological investigations in southern Thailand relevant to Srivijaya, Cambridge university's program, about which Janice Stargardt has also written, has been particularly informative. Although that work presupposes, rather than demonstrates, a "Srivijayan" period in the peninsula, it has clarified the nature of the local economy during the period of alleged Srivijayan hegemony. Much of this effort has concentrated on the Satingpra peninsula, a narrow strip of land between the Gulf of Siam and a network of sheltered, inland waterways centering on four large, interconnected lakes. (See Figure 8.) According to Stargardt, the evidence indicates the existence of an elaborate "hydraulic" system, dating primarily from the pre-Srivijayan Khmer period of the isthmus and resembling hydraulic achievements across the gulf at Funan. The Srivijayan civilization of west Indonesia, she notes, was not renowned for this type of undertaking.⁵⁵ Together with the presence in the vicinity of pre-Angkorian Khmer statuary and a preponderance of Khmer wares among the trade pottery, this evidence underscores "the strong Khmer influence on peninsular Thailand, beginning during the Funan period, surviving the fall of Funan itself and by no means obliterated by the imposition of Srivijayan suzerainty in the early eighth century."⁵⁶ This testimony scarcely provides confirmation of Srivijayan hegemony in the region, but if we assume its presence nonetheless, it would seem that the flourishing commerce of the

Srivijayan period was founded upon the technological achievements of earlier centuries.

The elaborate system of canals which once existed there has been carefully traced.⁵⁷ Stargardt suggests that it was capable of carrying seagoing ships to locations up and down the Satingpra peninsula and also led into hinterland lake and river waterways, thereby fostering transport, communications and trade. The city of Songkhla developed at the southern tip of the Satingpra peninsula, dominating the entrance to the lake system from the gulf and perhaps controlling traffic and protecting shipping against piracy.

Evidence of a flourishing ceramic industry was discovered on the peninsula at Kok Moh, consisting of unglazed earthenware in an impressive variety of styles, some of which were evidently

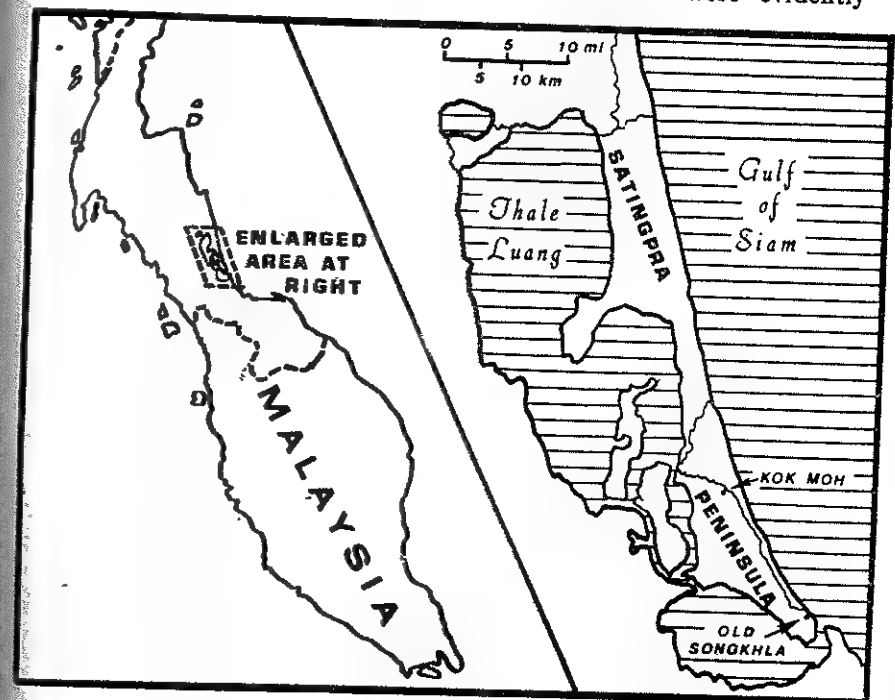


Figure 8 : Southern Thailand, Showing the Satingpra Peninsula (adapted from Stargardt)

created not for domestic use but as votive wares or containers in the trans-isthmian luxury trade in oils and powdered gums. Stargardt observes: "In general, the production level and type indicated by the deposits suggests a specialized industry manufacturing for an external cash market, not a local village pottery."⁵⁸

Remains of about two hundred tanks have also been found on the peninsula in frequent association with "substantial" monastic buildings. "Monastic endowments", notes Stargardt, "appear to have gone together with the development of storage tanks on the Satingpra Peninsula during the Srivijayan period."⁵⁹ Whether all of these projects reflect purely local efforts, or whether a king who resided elsewhere ordered their construction by *corvée* labor and then endowed monastic centers with lands to oversee canal operation and derive income from it, is unknown, since the evidence is compatible with either interpretation.

The Satingpra peninsula may have been located on the southern fringe of Tāmbraḷiṅga, although Stargardt does not say so. If we move northward to the region of present-day Nakhon Si Thammarat, we are clearly in the realm of Tāmbraḷiṅga. Nearby, at Wat Sema-muang, is the find-spot of the Ligor inscription of 775 A.D., which has long served as a major piece of evidence supporting the thesis that Srivijayan authority encompassed the Malay peninsula, at least in the eighth century, and perhaps evidence for the introduction of Mahāyāna Buddhism into the peninsula at that time as well. It is worthwhile reconsidering that record here, since it has contributed so much to our understanding, and perhaps misunderstanding, of Srivijaya.

Part "A" of the Ligor inscription, to employ the terminology proposed by Coedes, celebrates the inauguration of a Buddhist sanctuary consisting of three stūpas and two chaityas, constructed at the behest of the king of Srivijaya. The event has been taken as an excuse for the composition of an elaborate, inscriptional eulogy to the monarch. It is composed in Sanskrit verse, not in Old Malay. Just as the king of Srivijaya took advantage of the occasion to glorify himself, so too the poet took his commission as an excuse to engage in a self-conscious display of Sanskrit virtuosity, through a series of extravagant similes design to extol the king's virtues. This display seems to reflect the self-satisfaction

of Srivijaya's cultural "arrival," as measured by the court poets' mastery of ornate, stereotyped, poetic forms which were governed by esoteric rules. On the other side of the stele from part "A" appears the incomplete text of "B," which praises a Sailendra king who is styled Śrīmahārāja and is either named or likened to Viṣṇu.

In his brilliant synthesis of 1918, Coedes relied heavily upon this inscription. First, Ligor's location on the east coast of the Malay peninsula seemed to indicate that Srivijayan power spanned both sides of the Strait of Malacca and extended far up the east coast of the peninsula. Secondly, the Sailendra dynasty mentioned in "B" appeared to provide the name of Srivijaya's ruling dynasty. Unfortunately for that thesis, there is really no necessary connection between sides "A" and "B" and there is no reason to believe that they were commissioned by the same king, let alone constitute a continuation of the same record. Coedes had simply assumed that they were related, and subsequently recognized that this assumption was unjustified. The dissociation of the two sides of the Ligor stele meant that there was no longer a demonstrable connection between the Sailendras and Srivijaya because while "A" mentioned a Srivijayan king but said nothing about the Sailendras, side "B" mentioned a Sailendra king but said nothing about Srivijaya. Similarly, Coedes had assumed that the "Viṣṇu" of side "B" was the name of a second king, but in the face of later criticism by R. M. Ng. Poerbatjaraka and others, changed his mind and argued that side "B" mentions only one king, who is either named or likened to Viṣṇu.⁶⁰

The treatment of the Ligor inscription by Coedes and those who have followed him has involved another elementary, yet perhaps more serious, assumption which has not been challenged. Quite simply, everyone who has written about the Ligor inscription has assumed that it implies political control by the Srivijayan king of the area in which the inscription was found. Students of ancient Indian history often make the same kind of assumption—for example, in determining the extent of Aśoka's empire from the find-spots of Aśokan inscriptions—but it can be a misleading premise. There must be a context of supporting evidence before it can be accepted as anything more than a hypothesis.

We know from Pāla and Chōḷa inscriptions⁶¹ that Sailendra

kings who may have been kings of Śrīvijaya⁶³ sponsored the construction of Buddhist *viharas* in each of those realms—one at Nālandā in the mid-ninth century, the other just a century later at the Chōla port of Nāgapattinam, presumably for the benefit of pilgrims and merchants, respectively. So it clearly was not unknown for Southeast Asian rulers to sponsor the construction of *viharas* within territories ruled by other kings. No one has suggested that the Śailendras were ruling portions of Bengal or the Tamil country. But everyone has assumed that the Śrīvijayan king who erected a group of *stūpas* and *chaityas* on the east coast of Malaya was ruling there. The reason, presumably, is that whereas the Indian inscriptions were issued by the Indian rulers concerned, Ligor "A" was almost certainly sponsored by the Śrīvijayan king himself. However, I do not believe that this is a sufficient reason for asserting that the Śrīvijayan king necessarily ruled a portion of the Malayan coast in the region of Ligor.⁶³

In fact, the positing of an independent status for Tāmbraḷiṅga would resolve some difficulty which O. W. Wolters has seen with regard to reconciling the Ligor inscription with other evidence regarding Tāmbraḷiṅga. In his useful article on that kingdom, Wolters argues that with the exception of the Ligor inscription, the other evidence points to a persistently independent political role for Tāmbraḷiṅga.⁶⁴ Tāmbraḷiṅga, it is true, is listed among the thirteen places mentioned in the Tanjore inscription in the form *Madamāliṅgam*. But Wolters correctly observes that the Tanjore list cannot be taken to be a list of Śrīvijaya's dependencies. He concludes that the history of Tāmbraḷiṅga has been given a "misleading Śrīvijayan bias" and that the control which Śrīvijaya exercised over that state, as reflected in the Ligor inscription, must have slipped away before the end of the tenth century. Indeed, Wolters wonders why Śrīvijaya should have been interested in controlling Tāmbraḷiṅga at all, considering that it was far removed from the Strait of Malacca. Perhaps Wolters should have pressed his argument to its logical conclusion and reconsidered the whole question of Śrīvijayan hegemony in the peninsula. But when history rests upon so few pieces of evidence, not many scholars are anxious to cast doubt upon their value. Nevertheless, once we recognize that the Ligor inscription does not necessarily imply political control by Śrīvijaya, the difficulties noted by Wolters are

resolved. More recently, Stanley O'Connor, reasoning primarily from the archaeological evidence, has seen a "heavy Khmer influence" in Tāmbraḷiṅga and has concluded that it was "in the orbit of the Khmer empire" during the period of the Sung dynasty, i.e., 960–1279 A.D.⁶⁵

If nothing else, the Ligor inscription is certainly consistent with other evidence in attesting to the Śrīvijayan kings' enthusiastic patronage of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The fact that such patronage was not confined to Sumatra suggests that there was a systematic effort to create monastic centers far from the royal court, in much the same way that Chōla kings sponsored the creation of Brahman settlements in the countryside, and perhaps for the same reasons. The spiritual dialogue among monastic centers would have served to bind the scattered parts of the Malay trading world together and establish bonds of loyalty to the ruler of Śrīvijaya as supreme benefactor.

There is plenty of other evidence to show that the Malay peninsula was a stronghold of Buddhism in the heyday of Śrīvijaya, although not all of this evidence can be directly connected with Śrīvijaya. Coedes, in the 1920s, and Lamb and O'Connor, more recently, have studied the many small, votive tablets which have been found in southern Thailand and northern Malaya.⁶⁶ These small, circular or pear-shaped clay tablets display a Mahāyānist image or images on one side and sometimes on the other a circular, stamped inscription consisting of a stereotyped, votive formula.⁶⁷ "All the tablets of this class are stylistically closely related to the Pala art of Bengal," observes Lamb, "and it may well be that the stamps for the tablets were actually manufactured at some Indian centre of Buddhist pilgrimage like Nālandā."⁶⁸ Most of the tablets were found in limestone caves, which may have been inhabited or frequented by groups of resident or traveling monks. Coedes dates his Siamese finds to the tenth century, and Lamb dates his Malayan ones, more cautiously, somewhere between the tenth and thirteenth centuries—definitely in Śrīvijayan times.⁶⁹

The "disseminative" character of Śrīvijaya's Buddhism is a matter of some importance. Śrīvijaya's relationship with India and Indian culture seems to have been on a markedly equalitarian basis. The fame of Śrīvijaya among Chinese Buddhists, both as a halfway house on the way to Bengal and as a religious center in its

own right, and the construction of *viharas* and other structures as far away as Nālandā and Nāgapattinam by Śrīvijayan kings all demonstrate an interesting counter-flow of influences back to India. Nor should we discount the possibility that at least a few Buddhists from the Indian subcontinent may have come to Śrīvijaya to study. According to a Tibetan tradition, Atiśa, the eleventh century reformer of Tibetan Buddhism, is said to have spent about a dozen years in "Suvarṇadvīpa," almost certainly Sumatra, studying under one Dharmakīrti. Nilakanta Sastri observes that "the Tibetan biography of Atiśa says that Suvarṇadvīpa was the chief centre of Buddhism, and that Dharmakīrti, its chief priest, was considered the greatest scholar of his time."⁷⁰

That Śrīvijaya espoused a fully-developed Buddhism explains the important fact which is clear from the sources, namely that the direction of Śrīvijaya's cultural, if not commercial, ties with India was overwhelmingly toward north India and especially toward the Pāla domain in Bengal, where Buddhist institutions had not been undermined to the extent that they had in the far south. By the time of Rājaraṇa I, the Hindu revival which had begun under the Pallavas had led to the virtual eclipse of Buddhism in the Tamil country. Rājaraṇa's cooperation with the king of Śrīvijaya in constructing the Nāgapattinam *vihara* is striking precisely because it is so unusual. It is hard to resist the conclusion that support for this project by the Chōḷa court reflected diplomatic and, I think, commercial aims. If Tamil merchants could have a Hindu temple in Takuapa, could not Malays have a Buddhist center in Nāgapattinam? Flourishing trade meant royal income from port duties, continued access to imported luxury goods, and ongoing diplomatic and commercial contacts with lands as distant as Cambodia and China, the implications of which will be discussed later.

Unlike the earlier Pallava contacts with Southeast Asia, which were rich in cultural content, those of the imperial Chōḷas seem to have been more exclusively political and commercial in nature.⁷¹ This is due in part to the fact that the religious evolution of southern India was following a divergent path from that of Śrīvijaya, which meant that the two powers had fewer institutions and values in common. Whereas the *vihara* which the Śrīvijayan king constructed in the Pāla domain was located at a major

Buddhist pilgrimage center, the one in the Chōḷa kingdom was confined to a port, almost certainly for the benefit of merchants. Despite the power and majesty of the Chōḷa kings, in their day the great cultural dialogue between south India and Southeast Asia subsided to a mere murmur, while the attention of Śrīvijaya shifted to northeastern India and perhaps Sri Lanka, both of which became the targets of Chōḷa attacks. It is not surprising that Chōḷa ambitions should have extended to island Southeast Asia as well. (What, I wonder, was the reaction in Śrīvijaya to the Chōḷa plunder of Buddhist monastic centers in Sri Lanka?)

But the acquisitive attitude of the Chōḷa monarchs also, and perhaps more importantly, reflects the growing volume and value of the China trade following the establishment of the Sung dynasty in the mid-tenth century. The fact that the growth of Chōḷa interest in overseas expansion occurred in the early Sung period, and that during the same years both the Burmans and the Khmers also appear to have developed an increasing interest in securing access to the isthmian trade of the Malay peninsula—as will be noted in the last chapter—is surely not a mere coincidence. The more commercially prosperous the island and peninsular realms became, the more that region attracted the acquisitive interest of outside powers.⁷²

WAS THERE A SRIVIJAYAN EMPIRE?

While additional observations could undoubtedly be made regarding the geography and archaeology of Śrīvijaya's maritime realm, some inferences can be drawn from what has been discussed in this chapter. First, the familiar conception of a far-flung and enduring Śrīvijayan maritime empire seems to be breaking down under the impact of revisionist scholarship. While both literary and archaeological evidence demonstrates a rich and flourishing commerce, there is much less evidence for a centralized Śrīvijayan state whose effective control extended across the Strait of Malacca and up to the isthmian tracts of the peninsula. Recent interpretations of peninsular archaeological evidence seem to stress its Khmer rather than Sumatran affiliations. And archaeological investigations in Sumatra have not only cast doubt on Palembang's alleged role as the Śrīvijayan capital, but have also encouraged the development of analytical models of Śrīvijaya which stress its

structural peculiarities and impermanence (except in name) as contrasted with the more enduring character of agrarian states.

Were it not for the references to Śrīvijaya in the eighth-century Ligor inscription and the eleventh-century Tanjore record, says Bennet Bronson, the documentary evidence would lead us to believe that Śrīvijaya was only a minor kingdom that disappeared within a century after its founding around 650 A.D.¹⁵ This assertion rests in part on Bronson's belief that whereas the *Shih-li-fo-shih* of seventh- and eighth-century Chinese records is an acceptable phonetic transcription of Śrīvijaya, the names *San-fo-ch'i* and *Sribuza*, which begin to appear in Chinese and Arabic records after a 150 year gap in the record, are not. Furthermore, the Śrīvijaya which is referred to in the seventh-century records is not necessarily the same as the entities by that name which are referred to after about 750 A.D. We can easily imagine, Bronson remarks, that the name was simply adopted, for purposes of prestige or dynastic validation, by one or more later and equally short-lived states that may have had little connection with the original Śrīvijaya. He cites as parallel cases medieval and Turkish states using the name of Rome. And of course we could easily add Indian examples such as the revival of formerly prestigious names like Chōḷa and Chāḷukya, not to mention chiefly appropriation of generalized identities like "Rājput."

So, was there a far-flung maritime empire controlled by the ruler of Śrīvijaya at the time of Rājendra's raid in 1025 A.D.? On present evidence, we just don't know. There clearly was a state by that name in Rājendra's day, but it appears as only one name in the Tanjore list of thirteen, perhaps of no greater importance than the others. If there was really no far-flung empire controlling maritime commerce with China, then the "commercial stranglehold" argument which is often invoked as a motive for the Chōḷa attack ceases to be relevant. We should not be hasty to abandon that theory, but its evident weakness is not a crucial issue, since as I noted at the outset of this study, the explanation for the raid must be sought primarily within the Chōḷa state itself, in the "push" factors that compelled Chōḷa expansion rather than in the "pull" factors that drew the Chōḷas into Southeast Asia. Pull factors are not unimportant, but are necessarily secondary. In any case, we can readily account for the Chōḷa interest in Śrīvijaya without

resorting to a commercial strangulation theory for which there is no direct evidence.

Although the picture of "Śrīvijaya" has become more complicated in recent years, and the conventional view of it more doubtful, we still have a very clear impression of a Southeast Asian world enjoying a high degree of commercial prosperity, sufficient to attract the attention of an aggressive king like Rājendra. And even if we entertain doubts about whether the Chōḷas actually conquered—or even reached—all of the places mentioned in the Tanjore list, the fact remains that the fame and prosperity of those places was such that the poet who eulogized Rājendra's exploits was convinced that their conquest constituted a glorious achievement.

Rajendra and Maritime Southeast Asia

I have postponed until this final chapter a direct examination of the evidence relating to the presumed Chōla conquest of Śrīvijaya, and it is now time to address the issue. For an event that is so often mentioned in the scholarly literature, and a variety of fanciful activities inferred therefrom—such as speculations on the duration of Chōla “rule” in Southeast Asia—it rests upon slender evidence indeed. Essentially, it is based on the list of thirteen place-names, and their descriptive embellishment, included among Rājendra’s claimed conquests in the famous “Tanjore inscription,” located on the west wall of the central shrine of his father’s great temple in Tañjāvūr. The relevant portion of the record reads as follows:

[Rājendra] having despatched many ships in the midst of the rolling sea and having caught Saṅgrāma-Vijayōttuṅgavarman, the king of Kaḍāram, together with the elephants in his glorious army, [took] the large heap of treasures which [that king] had rightfully accumulated; captured with noise the [arch called] Vidyādharaṭoraṇa at the war-gate of his extensive capital [nagar], Śrīvijaya, with the jewelled wicket-gate adorned with the great splendor and the gate of large jewels; Paṇṇai with water in its bathing ghats; the ancient Malaiyūr with the strong mountain for its rampart; Māyiruḍiṅgam, surrounded by the deep sea [as] by a moat; Ilāṅgāsōka undaunted [in] fierce battles: Māppappālam having abundant [deep] water as defence; Mēviḷimbaṅgam guarded by beautiful walls; Vaḷaippandūru possessed of

Viḷaippandūru [?]; Talaitakkōlam praised by great men [versed in] the sciences; the great Mādāmaliṅgam [capable of] strong action in dangerous battles; Ilāmuri-dēsam, whose fierce strength rose in war; the great Ṇakkavāram, in whose extensive gardens honey was collecting; and Kaḍāram of fierce strength, which was protected by the deep sea.¹

Analysis of the place-names in this inscription, along with the relevant evidence from Chinese, Arab, and local sources has added substantially to the literature on Southeast Asian historical geography. It would be digressive to discuss that impressive body of scholarship in detail, but some summary remarks are appropriate. While some of the toponyms defy precise location, and others are of debatable provenance, the majority can be at least tentatively identified.² Of the eleven for which tentative identification is possible, six are located on the Malay peninsula or (in the case of Māppappālam) in Tenasserim, while four are located on Sumatra (if we include Śrīvijaya among them) and Ṇakkavāram certainly represents the Nicobar islands. Only two places among the thirteen are unidentifiable, although scholars have made interesting guesses even about these. For a graphic representation of those locations, see figure 9.

It is one thing to treat these toponyms as data for historical geography, to show what the Tamils knew about maritime Southeast Asia in the eleventh century. It is quite another matter to infer Śrīvijayan political structure or Chōla imperial history from them. It is only an atomized list, and cannot be treated as an enumeration of the constituent parts of a Śrīvijayan thalassocracy. Just two of those places, namely Kaḍāram and Śrīvijaya, are explicitly linked in this account, since Śrīvijaya is stated to be the capital of the king of Kaḍāram.

But what about the basic assumption that those places were indeed “conquered” in some fashion by the Chōlas, if only in the minimal sense in which Rājendra could be said to have “conquered” the Ganges, in a sequence of plundering attacks? Ever since Georges Coedes “rediscovered” Śrīvijaya, scholars who have written about Rājendra’s claim have generally assumed that a Chōla expedition did occur, either in 1025 A. D. or at some time during the preceding year or two, since such an ambitious campaign



Figure 9: Probable Locations of Places in Southeast Asia Claimed as Conquests by Rājendra I
(names shown in italics)

would have required months, if not years, to complete. Indeed, there is an earlier but exceedingly casual reference to the alleged conquest of Kaḍāram contained in an epithet of Rājendra, by which he claims to have conquered Pūrvadēśam (southern Kosala country), the Ganges, and Kaḍāram (*Pūrvadēśamum Gaṅgaiyum Kaḍāramum koṇḍa*), found in a single inscription from Karnataka, dated in his eleventh year, or 1022–23 A.D.³ K.A. Nilakanta Sastri has dismissed this record with the observation that it is “obviously too early” and may represent a gift of the eleventh year recorded some years later.⁴ K.G. Krishnan, on the other hand, accepts its validity and attributes its brevity to the fact that the conquest of Kaḍāram was a very recent event and was referred to in that abbreviated form due to “want of time.”⁵

One difficulty with accepting that piece of evidence is that if Nilakanta Sastri is correct in asserting that Rājendra’s Ganges expedition, proceeding entirely by land, requiring a bit less than two years to complete and ended some in 1022 A.D., then it is hard to see how an equally time-consuming and logistically more demanding seaborne expedition—requiring that the Chōḷa army be transported by ships to locations where the troops could fight on land⁶—into Southeast Asia, even if it had set out immediately after the return of the Ganges expeditionary force, could have accomplished very much before the end of Rājendra’s eleventh year, in mid-1023 A.D. We would be forced to assume that the Ganges and Śrīvijayan expeditions were proceeding simultaneously, and that there were still enough troops left over to guard the Chōḷa heartland and to occupy northern Sri Lanka as well. Such considerations should make us pause to ask whether the alleged conquest of maritime Southeast Asia occurred at all.

Several years ago, Paul Wheatley sounded a note of skepticism on this very point, although for somewhat different reasons:

Hitherto, all commentators on the inscription which records this raid have accepted its inherent and explicit truthfulness. But if, as Rouffaer, Moens, and most authoritatively, Coedes suggest, *Vaḷaippanduru* should be equated with *Pāṇḍuraṅga* (= Phan Rang) in Campā—and no other acceptable identification has so far been proposed—it may well be queried whether the Cōḷa

fleet could indeed have penetrated that far. Does the list of sacked cities, in fact, constitute anything more than the received geographical knowledge of the age incorporated in a *praśasti* for the greater glory of the Cōḷa king? Undoubtedly there was a raid . . . but was every place mentioned in the inscription systematically looted by the Cōḷa freebooters? Until more information is forthcoming the integrity of the *praśasti* is unimpeached, but future investigators may care to accord it more careful historical, as distinct from textual, scrutiny.⁷

Although Wheatley is willing to accept the fact that a raid took place, his suggestion that the list of place-names might represent little more than the "received geographical knowledge of the day" is certainly a disquieting notion. And it is not an idea that can be casually dismissed, for poetic hyperbole and fanciful claims are all too familiar to historians who attempt to reconstruct political history from inscriptional sources.

At the other extreme, we find a few scholars, most notably R.C. Majumdar, who have asserted that there was actually more than one Chōḷa attack on Śrīvijaya, although there is little agreement on the dates. Majumdar, pursuing a singular interpretation of the Sanskrit preamble to the larger Leyden plates, has argued that there were two campaigns against Śrīvijaya, the first as early as Rājendra's sixth year, in 1017-18 A.D.⁸ K. G. Krishnan, among others, has rejected that thesis but has advocated an alternative view that the conquest was repeated around 1068-69 A.D., during the reign of Virarājendra.⁹ As will be noted below, that was a view which Nilakanta Sastri prudently rejected.

Since we lack the sort of strong, corroborating evidence for the Śrīvijayan raid that is available for Chōḷa activities in Sri Lanka, and the unresolved chronological problems noted above create further difficulties, there is a necessary element of doubt regarding Chōḷa claims. Yet the fact remains that a Chōḷa raid into Southeast Asia, comparable to the one that Rājendra launched towards the Ganges, is very plausible and perhaps even probable, but it is most unlikely to have included all of the thirteen places that were claimed. The campaign is plausible because it fits the Chōḷa pattern of compulsive expansion in this period, fits the

hypothesized aim of Rājendra to exceed his father's accomplishments and fits the persistent Chōḷa need to locate fresh sources of plunder or tribute. It also fits what was characterized earlier in this book as a long-term cycle of expansion and contraction of the Chōḷa imperial "bubble," which appears to have reached its maximum expansion during Rājendra's reign. Viewed in that light, the alleged conquest of maritime Southeast Asia could be regarded as the farthest extension of Rājendra's quest for "free-floating" resources. It may also have represented the point-of-diminishing-returns of eastward expansion, just like the situation encountered by the Frankish kings whom we considered earlier, the point at which the energy and resources expanded in an expedition became excessive in relation to the profits gained from it.

As we posited in the basic premise of this study, there was certainly a relationship between the Chōḷa commitment in Sri Lanka and Chōḷa interest in maritime Southeast Asia, but the relationship is not easy to define precisely. Did the Chōḷas' mounting frustration in Sri Lanka compel them to search for easy pickings further to the east? Or had the occupation of Sri Lanka been intended all along as a prelude to more distant conquests? Those are not mutually exclusive possibilities, of course. The sketchiness of the available evidence precludes definitive answers to such questions, but it is important to pose our queries in that manner because they place the emphasis where it really belongs, on the "push" factors that drove the Chōḷa imperial machine.

There are, however, more conventional explanations for the Chōḷa incursion into Southeast Asia, most of which place greater emphasis on the "pull" factors—that is, developments in Southeast Asia that provoked or, as some writers imply, virtually compelled the Chōḷas to intervene. Such explanations should be treated cautiously, since they convey an impression of defending Chōḷa behavior, as if to suggest that Indians have never attacked their neighbors except under severe provocation. The most familiar, and least satisfactory, version of this approach is the "trade strangulation" thesis, the theory that the Chōḷas had to break a stranglehold that the over-mighty empire of Śrīvijaya had developed over the maritime transit trade to China.¹⁰ But that

that thesis presupposes a centralized, authoritarian Śrīvijayan empire whose existence, in light of the recent, revisionist scholarship that we considered in the previous chapter, appears doubtful. Moreover, even if we assume that it would have been feasible to obstruct or restrict the lucrative transit trade, it is hard to see how such action would have served Śrīvijayan interests.

A more likely possibility is that as the Chōlas gradually widened their diplomatic horizons, coming into closer contact with China and various kingdoms of Southeast Asia, they were tempted to intervene in local situations that they sought to exploit to their own advantage. The extension of official, Chōla maritime contacts is clear enough. If the testimony of the *Sung Shih* is to be believed, a Chōla (*Chu-lien*) mission dispatched by Rājārāja I (*Lo-ts'a-lo-ts'a*) arrived in China in 1015 A.D. after a voyage lasting 1150 days, more than three years! And it was at about this same time (1014–15), early in Rājendra's reign, that a representative of the king of Śrīvijaya made a gift of jewels to a Hindu temple at the port of Nāgapaṭṭinam.¹¹ A few years later, around 1018–19, gold was donated—some of it described as *Chinakkanakam* or “China gold”—also by an agent of the king of Kedah, to feed the Brahmins there.¹² Although in neither record is the king explicitly called the ruler of Śrīvijaya, the sequential pattern of gifts plus the fact that the ruler of “Kaṭāram” is indeed so identified in the subsequent Tanjore record suggests that the Chōlas certainly thought of him as such. Perhaps these gifts were meant to reciprocate for the donations of land to a Buddhist *vihāra* in that port by Rājārāja I, as recorded in the larger Leiden plates. The whole sequence of eclectic religious grants at this Chōla port, with a Hindu and a Buddhist king cooperating to make grants to Buddhist and Hindu temples, strongly suggests a form of commercial diplomacy.

But this evidence suggests other things as well. It implies that considerable information was available to the Chōlas, through both official and commercial channels, about Southeast Asia. It also shows that Rājendra's subsequent attack, assuming that there *was* one, was not directed against a rival maritime empire (or series of port-kingdoms, depending on how you interpret the Tanjore list) with which the Chōlas had been in chronic conflict. Indeed, the

evidence of these religious donations, even if they were designed merely to encourage trade and perhaps enhance royal income from port duties, implies a long period of cordial relations with maritime Southeast Asia.

That the Chōlas habitually accommodated themselves to such diplomatic pieties is also suggested by a later piece of evidence from Burma. An inscription of king Kyanzittha of Pagan (1077–1112) asserts that as a result of a Buddhist religious mission to the “Chōli prince,” the latter cast off his adherence to false doctrines and was converted to Buddhism.¹³ This pious fiction probably signifies that the Chōla king, undoubtedly Kulōttuṅga I, gave the Burmese mission a polite reception for his own reasons—Kenneth Hall regards it as a form of commercial diplomacy¹⁴—and the envoys were sufficiently encouraged to imagine a miraculous conversion.

Perhaps the most explicitly political and relevant of these diplomatic overtures, one that immediately preceded Rājendra's alleged conquest, is preserved in his Karandai copper-plate charter, dated in his eighth year or about 1020 A.D. The occasion for issuing this charter was the creation of a colony of Brahmins, but its introduction includes the remarkable assertion that the king of Kāmbōja sent a chariot to the Chōla king in order to secure his aid and thereby save his own kingdom.¹⁵ If this is a reference, as it seems to be, to the king of Kāmbūja-dēśa or Cambodia, it demonstrates the impressively wide extent of Rājendra's contacts in Southeast Asia, even on the mainland.

Did the alleged threat come from Śrīvijaya? R. C. Majumdar has suggested that the threat was posed by Tāmbraḷiṅga, with the backing of Śrīvijaya.¹⁶ Alas, we do not know what response was made to this appeal. However, it could conceivably have provided the occasion—not the reason, but the excuse—for Rājendra's naval campaign.

RAJENDRA'S LEGACY : A CONTINUING PUZZLE

The theory that Rājendra's conquest of maritime Southeast Asia was little more than a raid, as K. A. Nilakanta Sastri concluded, still seems to be the best interpretation of that episode, based on currently available evidence. Still, there are a few

tantalizing indications that it may have had some lingering effects perhaps on Malay politics and certainly on Malay political lore. For one thing, we know from a Chinese inscription of 1079 A. D., during the reign of Kulōttuṅga I, that a "chief" of *San-fo-tsi* (the name by which Śrīvijaya was most commonly known to the Chinese), whose name is recorded as *Ti-hua-ka-lo*, reconstructed a Taoist temple in Canton that had been destroyed by a bandit chief and subsequently purchased local rice fields with which to endow it.¹⁷ (This is another pious document, in which the donor is viewed as having been converted to worship of the Tao.) Tan Yeok Seong, who has studied this record, states flatly that the ruler to whom the record refers is Kulōttuṅga I, and that this *Ti-hua-ka-lo* is the same as the king of that name who is described in the *Sung Shih* as the ruler of the Chōla (*Chu-lien*) kingdom, said to be a "vassal" state of *San-fo-tsi*. This *Ti-hua-ka-lo*, the author concludes, ruled both *Chu-lien* and *San-fo-tsi*, i.e., both the Chōla kingdom and Śrīvijaya.

As fascinating as this record is, the analysis of it by Tan Yeok Seong is still not wholly satisfactory. Although the record dates from 1079 A. D., the earlier events that it describes are attributed to the Chih Ping period, or 1064–67, prior to Kulōttuṅga's accession to the Chōla throne in 1070 A. D. The author gets around this problem by suggesting, rather implausibly, that Kulōttuṅga ruled his maritime empire from Sumatra until 1070, at which time he "reinstated" the king of Śrīvijaya and returned to India.

What does this Chinese evidence really signify? K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, among others, has been puzzled by the Chinese belief, preserved in the *Sung Shih* as well as in the Canton inscription, that the Chōla kingdom was a vassal of Śrīvijaya.¹⁸ It is tempting to dismiss the issue by suggesting that the Chinese simply got the relationship confused. But that theory still implies that there was some sort of ongoing relationship, one that might allow a king of Śrīvijaya to claim—at least to the Chinese—that the Chōla kingdom was really the "vassal" state. What kind of ambiguous relationship would qualify?

Could there have been a marriage alliance? It was, after all, very common for the Chōlas to establish such alliances with both defeated adversaries and potential rivals, so a marriage alliance

with the kings of Śrīvijaya, as a result of Rājendra's conquest or even under other circumstances, would not have been out of character.¹⁹ No such relationship is attested in Chōla sources, but belief in the establishment of just such an alliance, although preserved in a very late and fanciful rendition, has found its way into Malay political lore, in connection with the genealogical legitimization of the sultans of Malacca.

One of the most curious legacies of Chōla contacts with maritime Southeast Asia is the manner in which a Malay chronicler of the rulers of fifteenth-century Malacca, writing at a time when the Chōlas were but a memory, sought to incorporate the Chōla kings into the illustrious ancestry of the Malacca sultans, along with Alexander the Great and the kings of Śrīvijaya. This creative genealogy, which has been discussed at length by O. W. Wolters, has been preserved in an early version of the *Sejarah Melayu* or Malay Annals that is known as the *Raffles MS. No. 18*.²⁰ The genealogist so arranged his disparate materials as to show that all Malay kings were related—belonged, as it were, to a single family, hence the ruling family of the Malays—and that the rulers of Malacca were entitled to rule the Malays by virtue of their descent from that line. Thus, observes Wolters, "genuine events were, in fact, manipulated to serve the genealogist's purpose."²¹ It was not an act of pure invention, but the craftsmanlike editing of traditional material.

Although the alleged Chōla tie constitutes only a subordinate element in that story, it is presented there not as an isolated marital connection but as an ongoing alliance that began, or so it is possible to infer, with Śrīvijaya's conquest by Rājendra. As Wolters explains the *Sejarah Melayu* account, the sultans of Malacca were viewed by the genealogist as the descendants of the rulers of Singapore-Temasek, whose fifth ruler founded Malacca. The Singapore rulers in turn could claim descent from the rulers of Śrīvijaya (or Palembang, Wolters thinks²²), which kingdom is; however, referred to in this genealogy merely as *Lenggui* or *Glang Gui* ("treasure chest of jewels"). The royal family of Glang Gui intermarried with the Indian conqueror Raja Shulan, presumably Rājendra Chōla I. Shulan had overcome Glang Gui, whose mighty ruler Chulin was killed when the city fell, and had taken princess Onang Kiu, daughter of the dead ruler, as his wife. The

daughter of Shulan and Onang Kiu subsequently married Raja Suran Padshah of the house of the world-conqueror Raja Iskandar (Alexander the Great).²³ Their son was Raja Chulan, who succeeded his grandfather Shulan on the (Chōla) throne in India when the grandfather died, assuming control over Shulan's new capital of Bija-nagara. (Vijayanagar! Perhaps this is a garbled reference to Gaṅgaikonda-chōlapuram.) Raja Chulan visited the bottom of the sea and there married the sea-king's daughter, by whom he then had three sons. (Here the mysterious power of the ocean depths is added to the other claims to sovereignty by Chulan's descendants.) The third of these sons was Sri Tri Buana, who became the first ruler of Singapore.

In India, Chulan was succeeded on his throne at Bija-nagara by yet another son, born of an Indian consort who was also of Iskandar's illustrious lineage. Two generations later, a princess of this Indian line that was descended from Chulan married Raja Muda, third ruler of Singapore-Temasek, thus reinforcing the ties between the two lines of descent from Chulan. Indeed, her father the Chōla king allegedly rejected previous suitors on the grounds that their rank was not equal to his own, but was delighted when envoys from Singapore arrived to ask for the princess on behalf of Raja Muda. Although this account expresses a Malay point of view, and was included in the larger narrative in order to illustrate the prestige of Raja Muda's lineage and hence that of the sultans of Malacca who claimed descent from him, it also suggests the utility of marriage alliances, a fact well known to the Chōlas.

We need not examine all of the complex details of this contrived genealogy, of which the preceding account is but a brief summary, to see that the Chōlas made a great impression on the political lore of the maritime Malays. Possibly there really was a marriage alliance between the Chōlas and the (defeated?) ruling house of Srivijaya. But since in the *Sejarah Melayu's* version of events too few generations are allowed between the time of Raja Shulan (Rājendra) in the eleventh century, and the founding of Singapore by Sri Tri Buana in the fourteenth, that account must be highly condensed at best. Perhaps the Chōla connection was merely an inspired fiction. But what seems significant is that the Malay chronicler-genealogists of the fifteenth century and later

who compiled and preserved these accounts were so impressed by Malay memories of the Chōlas that they regarded an ancestral connection with them to be worth bragging about.

And the impression of a connection persisted on the Tamil side as well, if only in the repetitive claims perpetuated in Chōla conquest rhetoric. An inscription from the reign of Virarājendra (1063-69 A.D.) asserts that the king, having conquered Kaḍāram, "was pleased to give [it back] to [its] king who worshipped [his] feet [which bore] ankle-rings."²⁴ It is too brief, too isolated and perfunctory a reference for such an ambitious accomplishment. A similarly stereotyped reference appears in the *Kalingattupparaṇi*, which ascribes to Kulōttuṅga I the "destruction of Kaḍāram on the wide ocean." But Nilakanta Sastri, who calls attention to this passage, sensibly explains that claim by reference to the literary convention that encouraged poets to ascribe to a ruler the achievements of his predecessors.²⁵ The Chōla military disengagement from Sri Lanka that occurred in Kulōttuṅga's reign renders the likelihood of such an ambitious project in Southeast Asia even more remote.

Still, Kulōttuṅga's abandonment of ambitious schemes of overseas conquest obviously did not curb Chōla interest in Southeast Asia; for—as reflected in empirical evidence more convincing than mere conquest rhetoric—he appears to have gone out of his way to maintain cordial relations with the king of Kaḍāram. We know from the smaller Leiden plates that Kulōttuṅga reaffirmed support for the Buddhist *vihāra* that had been constructed in Nāgapattinam by the ruler (or rulers) of Kaḍāram back in the reign of Rājaraṇa I, around 1005 A.D.²⁶ The renewal of that support in a fresh charter, issued roughly 85 years later at the request of Malay envoys, creates an odd impression, as though no untoward incident, let alone a Chōla conquest, had occurred during the interim.

But it is more likely that Kulōttuṅga's gesture signified a resumption of cordial relations that had been interrupted by Rājendra's ambitions. If that is correct, then Kulōttuṅga's Nāgapattinam grant constituted a coded diplomatic statement, affirming the more modest and realistic aims of the court in light of the Sri Lankan project's collapse and Kulōttuṅga's preoccupation with the Chālukya problem in the north. It was a way of

announcing that the fever in the body politic had subsided, and that the Chōla state was now back to more peaceful and less threatening behavior toward its maritime neighbors to the east.

Notes

CHAPTER—I

1. *South Indian Inscriptions* series (hereafter, SII), Vol. II, Pt. 1, pp. 105–09.
2. Janice Stargardt, "Burma's Economic and Diplomatic Relations with India and China from Early Medieval Sources," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (1971), pp. 38–62, espec. p. 52.
3. S. N. Eisenstadt, *The Political Systems of Empires* (New York, 1963), espec. pp. 26–28.
4. Aidan W. Southall, *Alur Society* (Cambridge, Engl., 1956). The relevant discussion also appears as an excerpt under the title "A Note on State Organization: Segmentary States in Africa and in Medieval Europe," in Sylvia L. Thrupp, ed., *Early Medieval Society* (New York, 1967), pp. 147–55.
5. Here I am paraphrasing Southall's analysis, partly to avoid analytical problems arising from his use of the term "administration."
6. Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* (Delhi, 1980). Notable among his earlier discussions of this subject is the article entitled "The Segmentary State in South Indian History," in Richard G. Fox, ed., *Realm and Region in Traditional India* (Durham, 1977), pp. 3–51. See also the dissenting response by Bernard S. Cohn, entitled "African Models and Indian Histories," on pp. 90–113 in the same volume.
7. Georges Duby, *The Early Growth of the European Economy; Warriors and Peasants from the Seventh to the Twelfth Century*,

tr. by Howard B. Clarke (Ithaca, 1974; originally published in French in 1973).

8. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 51–52.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 109–10.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 114–15.

CHAPTER—2

1. See Thomas Trautmann, *Dravidian Kinship* (Cambridge, 1981), especially chapter 6.
2. V. Balambal identifies her as his sister, however. See *Feudatories of South India, 800–1070 A.D.* (Allahabad, 1978), p. 157.
3. No. 260 of 1915. (Here and hereafter, inscriptions not published in an epigraphical series are cited by accession number at the Office of the Chief Epigraphist, Mysore City. Abstracts are available in the *Annual Reports*.)
4. See the reference in the Anbil Plates of Sundara-Chōla. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XV, No. 5, pp. 44 ff.
5. For a discussion of some of these center-hinterland relationships, see George W. Spencer and Kenneth R. Hall, "Toward an Analysis of Dynastic Hinterlands: The Imperial Cholas of 11th Century South India," *Asian Profile*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (February 1974), pp. 51–62.
6. For a detailed picture of settlement patterns in this period, see Y. Subbarayalu, *Political Geography of the Chola Country* (Madras, 1973), especially the maps and related information in Appendix IV.
7. For a discussion of such processes in the Kōngu country, see Brian Murton, "The Evolution of the Settlement Structure in Northern Kōngu to 1800 A.D.," in *Perspectives on a Regional Culture; Essays About the Coimbatore Area of South India*, ed. by Brenda E.F. Beck (New Delhi, 1979), pp. 1–33.

8. See especially Nirmal Kumar Bose, "The Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption," in *Cultural Anthropology and Other Essays*, revised ed. (Calcutta, 1953), pp. 156–70.
9. K. Sivathamby has argued that the so-called "desert" region (*palai*) is really a seasonal condition rather than a separate environment. It has been treated as a separate theme in Tamil literature, supplementary to the fourfold hill–pastureland–agrarian–littoral division, because the dry season imposes a special behavior pattern. Sivathamby adds that it was during that season that certain hill peoples used to take to "highway robbery" on the plains. See "Early South Indian Society and Economy: The Tinai Concept," *Social Scientist*, Vol. 3, No. 5 (December 1974), pp. 20–37.
10. See especially R. Nagaswamy, ed., *Seminar on Hero-Stones* (Madras, 1974).
11. Stein, *Peasant State*, p. 67, n. 6.
12. Subbarayalu, *Political Geography*.
13. Stein, *Peasant State*, p. 67.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
15. D. D. Kosambi, "The Basis of Ancient Indian History," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 75, No. 1 (October 1955), pp. 226–36.
16. See Burton Stein, "Coromandel Trade in Medieval India," in *Merchants and Scholars; Essays in the History of Exploration and Trade*, ed. John Parker (Minneapolis, 1965), pp. 49–62. A more thorough analysis of medieval commerce in general is contained in Kenneth R. Hall, *Trade and Statecraft in the Age of the Cōlas* (New Delhi, 1980).
17. Stein, *Peasant State*, passim. Elsewhere, he distinguishes three kingly traditions in medieval south India—viz., heroic, moral, and ritual kingship—and argues that the last of these provided the most perfect, or inclusive, means of incorporation of diverse kinship, vocational or interest, and territorial groups under a single kingship. See "All the Kings' mana: Perspectives on Kingship in Medieval South India," in *Kingship & Authority in South Asia*, ed. J. F. Richards (Madison, 1978), pp. 115–67.
18. I have analyzed this information in "Sons of the Sun: The

- Solar Genealogy of a Hindu King," *Asian Profile*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (February 1982), pp. 81-95.
19. Archaeological Survey of India, *SII*, Vol. II, No. 12.
 20. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
 21. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōlas*, rev. ed. (Madras, 1955), p. 454.
 22. Stein, *Peasant State*, p. 189.
 23. *SII*, Vol. II, No. 12.

CHAPTER—3

1. That is, the grandson of his daughter Kundavai and also the son of his granddaughter Ammaṅgādēvi, both of whom married princes of the Eastern Chālukya line.
2. S. R. Balasubrahmanyam, *Middle Chola Temples; Rajaraja I to Ku'ottunga I (A. D. 985-1070)* (Faridabad, 1975).
3. See George W. Spencer and Kenneth R. Hall, "Toward an Analysis of Dynastic Hinterlands: The Imperial Cholas of Eleventh Century South India," *Asian Profile*; Vol. 2, No. 1 (February 1974), pp. 51-62.
4. See *Cōlas*, Chapter VIII.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 454-55.
6. Stein, *Peasant State and Society*, pp. 189-91.
7. *Cōlas*, p. 171.
8. *Ibid.*, Chapter IX.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 169 and pp. 189-90, note 7.
10. See the enlightening discussion by Stein in *Peasant State and Society*, pp. 345-52.
11. *Epigraphia Indica*, XVI (1921-22), No. 11. For obvious reasons, this record also includes a claim of subsequent Chālukya victory over this brazen horde, preliminary to a conquest of the entire "southern quarter."
12. C. Sivaramamurti, *Royal Conquests and Cultural Migrations in South India and the Deccan* (Calcutta, 1955), p. 6.
13. *Middle Chola Temples*, p. 35.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
15. *South Indian Inscriptions*, II, No. 67.
16. *Ibid.*, p. I n.

17. *Epigraphia Indica*, XXI, p. 222.
18. See, for example, the references to Sembiyan Mahādēvi, widow of Gaṇḍarāditya. Epigraphical references are found in nos. 480, 481, 485, 488, 490, 491 and 492 of 1925 in the Chief Epigraphist's collection; also *SII*, XIX, nos. 381-83. For other citations, see my unpublished paper, "When Queens Bore Gifts: Women as Temple Donors in the Cōla Period," presented at the annual meeting of the Assn. for Asian Studies, Toronto, March 1981.
19. *South Indian Inscriptions*, II, nos. 57, 66, and 70. See also R. Nagaswamy, "South Indian Temple—as an Employer," *Indian Economic and Social History Review*; Vol. II, No. 4 (October 1965), pp. 367-72. Also G. W. Spencer, "Religious Networks and Royal Influence in Eleventh Century South India," *Journal of the Social and Economic History of the Orient*; Vol. XII, Pt. I (1969), pp. 42-56.
20. For an analysis, see G. W. Spencer, "Temple Money-Lending and Livestock Redistribution in Early Tanjore," *Indian Economic and Social History Review*; Vol. V, No. 3 (September 1968), pp. 277-93.
21. *SII*, II, no. 1.
22. Balasubrahmanyam, *Middle Chola Temples*, p. 70.
23. *SII*, II, Pt. IV, no. 92.
24. *Cōlas*, p. 194.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 225.
26. David Kaplan, "Men, Monuments, and Political Systems," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*; Vol. 19, No. 2 (Winter 1963), pp. 397-410.
27. Rājendra, too, utilized this device by associating his son Rājādhiraṇḍa I with himself from the year 1018, so that there is a substantial overlap between the two reigns, from 1018 to 1044 A. D.
28. *Epigraphia Indica*, IX, p. 233. For K. A. Nilakanta Sastri's reading of this record, see *The Cōlas*, p. 207.
29. Here I have followed Nilakanta Sastri's reading of the passage as *toḍu-kaḷar-cangu-voḍaḍal Mayipalanai*, where *cangu* or *ṣangu* is taken to mean "conch" (Skt. *śaṅkha*). *Cōlas*, p. 238, n. 63.

30. *Cōlas*, p. 208.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 209. Should we take seriously the reference to the conquest of (southern ?) Kośalai-nāḍu—perhaps the region around Rāyapura, in modern Raipur district, M.P.—which is mentioned *after* Oḍḍa-viṣāya, presumably a reference to coastal Orissa ? This would have constituted a marked deviation from the most direct route to Bengal. Either the prospect of spoils encouraged this detour to the west—in which case reaching the Ganges was scarcely an overriding objective—or else one or more of these place-names were gratuitously included in the inventory of conquests.
32. It is not unusual for descriptions of military campaigns to follow an implausible sequence. As we shall see, the list of places allegedly conquered by Rājendra I in the vicinity of the Malacca Strait does not reflect a sequential “progress” through maritime Southeast Asia, either.
33. *SHI*, III, Pt. III, no. 205, vv. 110-119, espec. v. 118.

CHAPTER—4

1. See especially W. M. K. Wijetunga, “Some Aspects of Cola Administration of Ceylon in the Eleventh Century,” *University of Ceylon Review*, XXIII, 1-2 (1965), pp. 67-81.
2. *Cūlavamsa* (hereafter cited as *Cv.*) 50.15.
3. *Cv.* 50. 33-36. The Chronicle frequently likens the Tamils to devils.
4. *Cv.* 51. 27-51. The Sri Lankan troops, upon capturing Madurai, are said to have “plundered it completely.”
5. Many years later, in the late eleventh century, the Chōla king Kulōttuṅga I would be described in his eulogy as “pleased to seize the pearl fisheries of the Madurai country.” *SHI*, II, Pt. II (1892), no. 58. On Sri Lanka, see A. Appadorai, *Economic Conditions in Southern India (1000-1500 A. D.)* (Madras, 1936), p. 459.
6. The Chronicle suggests further decimation of the Sri Lankan troops during this campaign, due to plague. *Cv.* 52. 77-81.
7. *Cv.* 53. 8-10.
8. *Cv.* 53. 47ff.

9. The year 993 corresponds to the earliest date of inscriptions that include Ilamaṇḍalam (Sri Lanka) among Rājaraḥa's conquests. Although the Chronicle comments on this period in detail, it does not refer to Rājaraḥa by name, so it is difficult to disentangle the events of his reign from later developments, except by synchronism with Chōla inscriptions. For further evidence relating to Rājaraḥa's invasion, and the recent discovery of one of his inscriptions near Trincomalee, see the discussion below.
10. Wilhelm Geiger has argued that this use of Indian mercenaries was necessary because the indigenous Sinhalese warrior class had become attached to the land and as a result had lost its mobility. See Heinz Bechert, ed., *Culture of Ceylon in Medieval Times* (Wiesbaden, 1960), p. 30. Whatever the reason, the price that was paid was high, for the mercenaries created as many problems as they solved.
11. *Cv.* 44. 71-73
12. *Cv.* 44. 105ff.
13. The Chronicle refers to Rohaṇa's “terrible wildernesses” (51.136), which account for its popularity as a refuge for defeated kings, princes, rebels, and other malcontents. The mountainous central region of the island, Malaya-desā, frequently served the same purpose. *Cv.* 51.112ff.
14. *Cv.* 44. 130 ff.
15. The compiler of the relevant section of the Chronicle was the *bhikkhu* Dhammakitti, who lived in the late twelfth century. Since he relied upon various unidentified sources for his narrative, I have referred to “chroniclers” in order to encompass both Dhammakitti and his unknown literary informants. For a discussion of the attitudes and values reflected in the Chronicle, see L. S. Perera, “The Pali Chronicle of Ceylon,” in C. H. Philips, ed., *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon* (London, 1961), pp. 29-43.
16. *Cv.* 55.3-5.
17. This invasion is said to have taken place in the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Mahinda V, which corresponds to 1017 A. D. That would place the Chōla occupation of Rājaraḥa *after* the reign of Rājaraḥa, in the time of his son

- Rajendra I. But the year 1017 is an improbably late date for the invasion. Rājarāja had in fact established a strong foothold in Sri Lanka before that year. We know that a Saivite temple was constructed in Polonnaruva in the time of Rājarāja (Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, *Report* for 1906, pp. 17ff.), and revenues of five villages in Sri Lanka were assigned to the great temple in Tañjāvūr by that king. (*SII*, III, Pt. III, 1920, no. 92.) Hence the number 36, like so many other numbers included in the Chronicle, is probably a purely rhetorical device, a multiple of the magic number twelve.
18. Cv. 74.1.
 19. An especially enlightening analysis of the monastic economy is contained in R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough: Monasticism and Economic Interest in Early Medieval Sri Lanka* (Tucson, 1979).
 20. Many of these were debt-slaves, but Tamil war-slaves were sometimes put to work on pious projects as well. Cv. 44.70-73.
 21. Cv. 46.20-22.
 22. Bechert, *Culture of Ceylon*, p. 193.
 23. Cv. 55.16-22.
 24. Or Pulatthinagara; the Chōlas called it Jananāthamangalam, after one of Rājarāja's titles.
 25. See S. Paranavitana, "The Capital of Ceylon during the ninth and tenth centuries," *Ceylon Journal of Science*, II (1928-33), pp. 141-47.
 26. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri in *History of Ceylon*, ed. by H. C. Ray et al. (Colombo, 1959), p. 349; also A. L. Basham, "The Background to the Rise of Parākkamabāhu I," *Ceylon Historical Journal*, IV, 1-4 (1954-55), p. 15.
 27. See especially K. Indrapala, "South Indian Mercantile Communities in Ceylon, circa 950-1250," *Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies*, n.s. I, no. 2 (July-Dec. 1971), pp. 101-13. See also his article entitled "Some Medieval Mercantile Communities of South India and Ceylon," *Journal of Tamil Studies*, II, no. 2 (October 1970), pp. 25-39. A forceful argument for a close relationship between Chōla statecraft and itinerant merchants is presented in Kenneth R.

- Hall, *Trade and Statecraft in the Age of the Cōlas* (New Delhi, 1980).
28. Burton Stein, "Coromandel Trade in Medieval India," in *Merchants and Scholars: Essays in the History of Exploration and Trade*, ed. by John Parker (Minneapolis, 1965), pp. 49-62.
 29. See K.R. Venkatarama Ayyar, "Medieval Trade, Craft and Merchant Guilds in South India," *Journal of Indian History*, XXV, no. 3 (December 1947), pp. 269-80. Also the articles by K. Indrapala cited above, note 27.
 30. *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, III, no. 4 (1929) and V, no. 16 (1963); the quote is taken from the latter, which is a revised reading.
 31. *Ibid.*
 32. *Epigraphia Indica*, XVIII (1926), No. 38.
 33. S. Paranavitana, "Polonnaruva Inscription of Vijayabahu I," *Epigraphia Indica*, XVIII (1926) pp. 330-38.
 34. Cv. 60. 35 ff.
 35. Indrapala, "South Indian Mercantile Communities," p. 112.
 36. Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, *Report* for 1906, pp. 17ff; Arch. Survey of India, *SII*, IV (1923), nos. 594-96 and 598.
 37. Wijetunga, "Some Aspects of Cola Administration." p. 74. See note 1 above. Also *SII*, IV (1923), no. 1412.
 38. Cv. 58. 11ff.
 39. Texts of many of them have appeared in the *Trincomalee Inscription Series*, privately published at the initiative of S. Gunasingam. I am indebted to him for generously providing me with reprints of relevant publications from that series, along with other relevant materials. He is not, of course, responsible for my interpretation of that evidence.
 40. Selladurai Gunasingam, "Three Cōla Inscriptions from Trincomalee," *Trincomalee Inscriptions Series*, No. 2 (Peradeniya, 1979), pp. 1-5.
 41. S. Gunasingam, "Two Inscriptions of Cola Ilankesvara Deva," *Trincomalee Inscriptions Series*, No. 1 (Peradeniya, 1974.)
 42. Cv. 55. 19ff.
 43. I have adopted Geiger's dates here, although it should be noted that the Chronicle's attribution of twelve years may represent a purely rhetorical or magical number.

44. His military success no doubt served as verification of appropriate ancestral credentials; his illustrious genealogy is credulously recited in the Chronicle.
45. Cv. 58. 16-17
46. For a radically different interpretation of these conflicts, and indeed the entire period covered by this chapter, see Senarat Paranavitana, *Ceylon and Malaysia* (Colombo, 1966). The extraordinary interpretations advanced in that work are so problematic that they have not gained widespread support among historians, in spite of the inestimable value of the author's earlier scholarship. I have confined my own analysis to the exposition of an alternative explanation of the course of events.
47. Compare the comments by Nilakanta Sastri in *The Cōlas*, p. 321.

CHAPTER—5

1. Wilhelm G. Solheim II, "New Light on a Forgotten Past," *National Geographic*, XXXIX, 3 (1971), pp. 330-39.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 338. See also D. T. Bayard, "Excavations at Non Nok Tha, Northeastern Thailand, 1968," *Asian Perspectives*, XIII (1970), pp. 109-43 and the same author's "The Chronology of Prehistoric Metallurgy in North-east Thailand: *Silabhumī* or *Samrddhābhūmī*?" in Smith and Watson, eds., *Early South-East Asia*, pp. 15-32, and "The Roots of Indochinese Civilisation: Recent Developments in the Prehistory of Southeast Asia," *Pacific Affairs*, 53, No. 1 (1980), pp. 89-114.
3. C. F. Gorman, "Excavations at Spirit Cave, North Thailand: Some Interim Interpretations," *Asian Perspectives*, XIII (1970), pp. 79-107. See also Solheim's remarks in the same issue: "Northern Thailand, Southeast Asia, and World Prehistory," pp. 145-62.
4. Solheim has expounded his views in numerous articles. Many of these are cited in the bibliography.
5. Solheim, "Reflections on the New Data of Southeast Asian Prehistory, Austronesian Origin and Consequence," *Asian Perspectives*, XVIII (1975), pp. 146-60; quote from p. 157. In this connection see also the symposium on "Movement of

- the Malayo-Polynesians, 1500 B.C. to A.D. 500," in *Current Anthropology*, 5, No. 5 (1964), pp. 395-436; also Keith Taylor, "Madagascar in the Ancient Malayo-Polynesian Myths," in Hall and Whitmore, eds., *Explorations in Early Southeast Asian History* pp. 25-60.
6. Solheim, "Reflections," p. 157.
7. H. A. Giles, tr., *The Travels of Fa-Hsien (A. D. 399-414), or Record of the Buddhist Kingdoms* (London, 1923), pp. 76, 78. See also the description in J. C. Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society; Essays in Asian Social and Economic History* (The Hague, 1955), p. 78.
8. G. R. Tibbetts, "Pre-Islamic Arabia and South-East Asia," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 29, pt. 3 (1956), pp. 185-86.
9. The most illuminating of these texts dates from the period after the Roman conquest of Egypt in 70 B. C. This is the first-century *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, an extraordinarily detailed navigation manual written by an anonymous merchant. This work, based partly upon experience and partly on hearsay, includes long lists of trading ports and goods which have been the subject of considerable scholarly attention. See W. H. Schoff, ed., *The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* (Philadelphia, 1912).
10. George F. Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times* (Princeton, 1951).
11. E. H. Warmington, *The Commerce Between the Roman Empire and India* (Cambridge, England, 1928), p. 72.
12. Sir Mortimer Wheeler has argued that Indian importation of Roman coins declined sharply after Nero's reign because of Nero's debasement of his silver coinage in A.D. 63. This would imply that Indians accepted Roman coins, not as a universal coinage, but as bullion of a quality guaranteed by the imperial stamp, and that Indian confidence in its quality was destroyed by the debasement. See Wheeler, *Impact and Imprint: Greeks and Romans Beyond the Himalayas* (Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1959), pp. 4-5. For a map of find-spots of coin hoards, see Joseph E. Schwartzberg, ed., *A Historical Atlas of South Asia* (Chicago and London, 1978), p. 24, plate III. C, 5a.

13. R.E.M. Wheeler, A. Ghosh and Krishna Deva, "Arikamedu: an Indo-Roman Trading-Station on the East Coast of India," *Ancient India*, No. 2 (1956), pp. 17-124. In addition to the many Indian artifacts, Wheeler discovered some 40 fragments of Italian arretine ware and 116 amphorae. Wheeler jumped to the conclusion that Roman artifacts at Arikamedu implied the presence of Romans. It is more likely that the "Roman" trade was carried on by intermediaries.
14. R. Nagaswamy and A. Abdul Majeed, *Vasavasamudram; a Report on the Excavation Conducted by the Tamilnadu State Department of Archaeology* (Madras, 1978).
15. Wheeler, *Impact and Imprint*, p. 13.
16. L. Malleret, "The Buried Town of Oc-Eo and the Funanese Sites of Transbassac in Cochin China," *Annual Bibliography of Indian Archaeology for 1940-47*, Vol. 15, pp. li-lvi. See the same author's *L'archeologie du delta du Mekong; I: l'exploration archeologique et les fouilles d'Oc-Eo* (Paris, 1959).
17. G. R. Tibbetts, "Early Muslim Traders in South-East Asia," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 30, pt. 1 (1957), pp. 10-11.
18. Tibbetts, "Pre-Islamic Arabia," p. 182.
19. Hourani, *Arab Seafaring*, p. 75.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-78.
21. See especially these articles by Goitein: "The Documents of the Cairo Geniza as a Source for Mediterranean Social History," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 80 (1960), pp. 91-100; "From the Mediterranean to India: Documents on the Trade to India, South Arabia and East Africa from the eleventh and twelfth centuries," *Speculum*, 29 (1954), pp. 181-97; and "Letters and Documents on the India Trade in Medieval Times," *Islamic Culture*, 37 (1963), pp. 37-67.
22. R. K. Mookerji, in his *History of Indian Shipping*, makes a valiant effort to synthesize the fragmentary evidence into a coherent picture, but is forced to resort to such techniques as minute descriptions of the ships depicted in bas-reliefs on the Javanese monument of Borobudur, on the grounds that since Java was "Colonized" by Indians, the ships depicted on the panels must be Indian seagoing vessels. See Mookerji, *Indian Shipping; a History of the Seabourne Trade and*

- Maritime Activity of the Indians from the Earliest Times (Calcutta, 1957).
23. *Periplus*, p. 34.
24. A. L. Basham, "Notes on Seafaring in Ancient India," *Arts and Letters*, 23, No. 2 (1949), p. 61.
25. Cited by Mookerji, *Indian Shipping*, p. 52.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 53n. Quote is from the *Mahajanaka-Jataka*.
27. Basham, "Notes on Seafaring," p. 69.
28. Sir Roland Braddell has argued that by the time of Somadeva's *Kathasariisagara* in the eleventh century, "Suvarṇadvīpa" had come to specify Sumatra. See "Malayadvīpa; A Study in Early Indianization," *Malayan Journal of Tropical Geography*, 9 (1956), p. 17. I-Ching called it *Chin-chou* or "Gold Island," and the Malays call it *Pulu Mas*, which has the same meaning.
29. Sylvain Levi, "Manimekhalā, a Divinity of the Sea," *Indian Historical Quarterly*, VI, no. 4 (1930), p. 599.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 613.
31. A. L. Basham argues that ancient India was much more secular-minded and tolerant than it became in later times as revulsion against foreign invaders strengthened prohibitions. See "Notes on Seafaring," pp. 64 and 68-69.
32. Van Leur *Indonesian Trade and Society*, p. 99.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
34. See Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture; Buddhist and Hindu Periods* (Bombay, fifth ed., 1965), p. 64.
35. Krom points out that the panels on the Borobudur which were taken from Mahāyānist texts in Sanskrit were assigned to individual artisans by the master-planner through instructions inscribed on the base of each panel. These phrases were written in Kavi, which suggests that they were meant for the eyes of local craftsmen, not of Indians. See N. J. Krom *Barabudur, Archaeological Description* (The Hague, 1927), Vol. 2, pp. 185-86.
36. This characterization applies primarily to the agrarian states of the mainland and Java. The situation in the maritime states, at least with regard to agricultural surplus and monument construction, was different.
37. I. W. Mabbett, "Devarāja," *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 10 (1969), pp. 202-23. For several other enlightening

- articles on Angkor and the general phenomenon of Indianization by Mabbett, consult the bibliography.
38. Bernard Groslier, "Our Knowledge of Khmer Civilization: A Re-Appraisal," *Journal of the Siam Society*, 48, pt. 1 (1960), pp. 3-4.
 39. A rather different view is taken by Paul Wheatley, who sees Indianization as facilitating a transition from a tribal economy based on "reciprocity" to a peasant economy whose dominant mode is one of "redistribution." While suggestive, that analysis is rather schematic and reminiscent of tidy "stage" theories of socio-economic development. See "Satyanṛta in Suvarṇadvīpa: From Reciprocity to Redistribution in Ancient Southeast Asia," in J. Sabloff and C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, eds., *Ancient Civilization and Trade* (Albuquerque, 1975), pp. 227-83.
 40. Lawrence Palmer Briggs, "The Syncretism of Religions in Southeast Asia, Especially in the Khmer Empire," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 71 (1951) pp. 230-49. See also the same author's "The Genealogy and Successors of of Sivāchārya; Suppression of the Great Sacerdotal Families by Suryavarman I," *Bulletin de l'école française d'Extrême Orient*, 46, pt. 1 (1952) pp. 177-85.
 41. Retold by D. G. E. Hall in *A History of South-East Asia* (London, 1960), p. 24.
 42. *Ibid.*, p. 24. Both of these stories contain magico-phallic elements characteristic of many dynastic origin myths, as well as the familiar Nāga theme.
 43. Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese; Studies in the Historical Geography of the Malay Peninsula Before A.D. 1500* (Kuala Lumpur, 1961), p. 186.
 44. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, "A Note on the Kaundinyas in India," *Artibus Asiae*, 24 (1961), pp. 403-06.
 45. See his *Les états hindouises d'Indochine et d'Indonésie* (Paris, 1964), p. 41.
 46. Konrad Bekker, "Historical Patterns of Culture Contact in Southern Asia," *Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. 11 (1951), p. 8.
 47. John Cady, *Southeast Asia: Its Historical Development* (New York, 1964), p. 41.
 48. See especially Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus; the Caste*

- System and its Implication*, transl. from the French 1966 edition (London, 1972 and other editions).
49. See Mabbett, "Devaraja," *op. cit.*
 50. Mabbett, "Kingship in Angkor," *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. 66, Pt. 2 (1978), pp. 1-58, quote from p. 30.
 51. Georges Coedes, "Le culte de la royauté divinisée, source d'inspiration des grands monuments du Cambodge ancien," *Conference*, V (1952), p. 10.
 52. Bernard Groslier and Jacques Arthand, *Angkor; Art and Civilization*, transl. by E.E. Smith (London, 1957), pp. 24-25.
 53. "Our Knowledge of Khmer Civilization," pp. 24-27.
 54. *Angkor; Art and Civilization*, p. 26.
 55. See Rebert Heine-Geldern, "Conceptions of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia," *Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. 2 (1942), pp. 15-30, and Georges Coedes, *Pour mieux comprendre Angkor; Cultes personnels et culte royal*, etc. (Paris, 1947), p. 15.
 56. Clifford Geertz, *Negara; the Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, 1980).
 57. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

CHAPTER—6

1. This dichotomy is discussed in an article by Harry Benda, "The Structure of Southeast Asian History: Some Preliminary Observations," *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol. 3 No. 1 (1962), pp. 106-38. In another article entitled "Communication and Production in Indonesian History," *Far Eastern Quarterly*, VII, No. 4 (1948), pp. 339-53, A. E. Sokol postulated a fundamental economic dichotomy between Java as a producer and Sumatra as a controller of communications. Not only economically, but also in agriculture and the plastic arts; Java was a creator while Sumatra was only a disseminator. However, research by O.W. Wolters on Srivijaya's early trade has refuted the economic side of that argument, since it is now clear that Sumatra did produce forest products for export. See Wolters, "The Po-Ssu Pine Trees," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XXIII (1960), pp. 323-50.

2. *Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient*, XVIII, No. 6 (1918), pp. 1-36.
3. Stanislas Julien, *Methode pour dechiffrer et transcrire les noms sanscrits qui se rencontrent dans les livres chinois*, etc. (Paris, 1861). See nos. 219, p. 97, and 299, p. 103.
4. "The Situation of the Country Called 'Shi-lo-fo-shai,'" *Notulen van de Algemeene en Bestuursvergaderingen van het Bataviaasche Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*, Deel XXIV (1886), Bijlage I, pp. i-v.
5. "Notes on the Malay Archipelago and Malacca Compiled, from Chinese Sources," in R. Rost, ed., *Miscellaneous Papers Relating to Indo-China and the Indian Archipelago* (London, 1887), p. 187.
6. *Researches on Ptolemy's Geography of Eastern Asia* (London, 1909), pp. 429, 527, 556.
7. "Inscriptions du Siam et de la peninsule malaise," *Bulletin de la commission archeologique de l'Indochine*, 1910, p. 153.
8. "Inscriptie van Kota Kapoer," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indie*, 1853, pp. 393-400.
9. See especially Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, Chapter VI. "The Isthmian Age."
10. Paul Wheatley, "Desultory Remarks on the Ancient History of the Malay Peninsula," in John Bastin, and R. Roolvink, eds., *Malayan and Indonesian Studies* (Oxford, 1964), pp. 37-75.
11. See Wolters *Early Indonesian Commerce; a Study of the Origins of Srivijaya* (Ithaca, 1967), especially Chapter 10.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
13. In addition to Wolters, see also Lawrence Palmer Briggs, "The Khmer Empire and the Malay Peninsula," *Far Eastern Quarterly*, IX No. 1 (1949), p. 257.
14. J. Takakasu, tr., *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practiced in India and the Malay Archipelago (A.D. 671-695)*, by I-Tsing (London, 1896), p. xxx. For this period see also O.W. Wolters, "Srivijayan Expansion in the Seventh Century," *Artibus Asiae*, XXIV (1961), pp. 417-24.
15. However, we should heed Bennet Bronson's warning that I-Ching was not a wholly disinterested observer. He may well have exaggerated the splendor and doctrinal authority of

- the place where he received his training. See "The Archaeology of Sumatra and the Problem of Srivijaya," in Smith and Watson, eds., *Early South East Asia*, p. 403.
16. For text and English translation, see K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *History of Sri Vijaya* (Madras, 1949), pp. 113-14.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 119-21.
18. See Tan Yeok Seong, "The Sri Vijayan Inscription of Canton (A.D. 1079)," *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 5, No. 2. (1965), pp. 17-24.
19. Takakasu, p. xxx. The translation of this phrase follows Wolters, "Srivijayan Expansion," p. 418.
20. Nilakanta Sastri, *Sri Vijaya*, p. 116.
21. Noted in Kenneth R. Hall, "State and Statecraft in Early Srivijaya," in Hall and Whitmore, eds., *Explorations in Early Southeast Asian History*, p. 99 note 23.
22. Until quite recently, this assumption was made by virtually all writers, but in the wake of the 1974 excavations at Palembang, the possibility that they were all moved to that spot by a later royal "collector" of antiquities must also be considered.
23. For the relevant statistics and a discussion, see R. B. Smith, "Mainland Southeast Asia in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries," in Smith and Watson, eds., *Early South East Asia*, pp. 443-56.
24. Translation by Friedrich Hirth and W. W. Rockhill, *Chau-Ju-kua: His Work on the Chinese and Arab Trade in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries Entitled Chu-Fan-Chi* (St. Petersburg, 1911), p. 62.
25. See J. N. Nksic, "Archaeology and Palaeography in the Straits of Malacca," in Hutterer, ed., *Economic Exchange and Social Interaction in Southeast Asia*, pp. 155-75. Wolters has expressed more than one view on this subject. See Wolters, "Landfall on the Palembang Coast in Medieval Times," *Indonesia*, no. 20 (1975), pp. 1-57 and "A Note on Sungsang Village at the Estuary of the Musi River in Southeastern Sumatra: a Reconsideration of the Historical Geography of the Palembang Region," *Indonesia*, no. 27 (1979), pp. 33-50.

26. "Palembang as Srivijaya; the Lateness of Early Cities in Southern Southeast Asia," *Asian Perspectives*, XIX, no. 2 (1976), pp. 220-39.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 222.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 233.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 234.
30. Bennet Bronson, "Exchange at the Upstream and Downstream Ends: Notes Toward a Functional Model of the Coastal State in Southeast Asia." in Hutterer, ed., *Economic Exchange and Social Interaction in Southeast Asia*, pp. 39-52.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
33. O. W. Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya in Malay History* (Ithaca, 1970), pp. 9-10.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
35. Stanley J. O'Connor, "Tambralinga and the Khmer Empire," *Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. 63, Pt. 1 (1975), pp. 161-75, espec. p. 162.
36. Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, p. 300.
37. See the translation by Wheatley, *Ibid.*, p. 49.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 292.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 300-01.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.
42. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, "Takuapa and its Tamil Inscription," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, XXII Pt. 1 (1949), pp. 25-30. This and other articles by Nilakanta Sastri have recently been reprinted in K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *South India and South-East Asia; Studies in Their History and Culture* (Mysore, 1978).
43. Alastair Lamb, "Takuapa: the Probable site of a Pre-Malaccan Entrepot in the Malay Peninsula," in Bastin, ed., *Malayan and Indonesian Studies*, pp. 76-86.
44. One could, of course, suggest that since one such dependency, Jih-lo-t'ing, is located farther north, Takola must have been under Srivijayan control, but that is a pallid argument at best.
45. But oddly, as Wheatley points out, it is not mentioned in the

- official T'ang histories, at least not under any recognizable toponym. *The Golden Khersonese*, p. 60.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 220.
 47. *Ibid.*, p. 217.
 48. "In Quest for Kalah," *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, I, no. 2 (1960), pp. 62-101. For a dissent, see Wheatley, "Desultory Remarks," pp. 68-70.
 49. Lamb, "Miscellaneous Notes on Early Hindu and Buddhist Settlements in Northern Malaya and Southern Thailand." *Federation Museums Journal*, VI (1961), pp. 1-90.
 50. Lamb argues by analogy with the Persian Gulf, where such a displacement of the dominant port over time did take place. See his "A Visit to Siraf, an Ancient Port on the Persian Gulf," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 37, Pt. 1 (1964), pp. 1-19. See also David Whitehouse, "Siraf: a Medieval Port on the Port on the Persian Gulf," *World Archaeology*, Vol. 2, no. 2 (1970), pp. 141-58.
 51. Janice Stargardt, "The Extent and Limitations of Indian Influences on the Protohistoric Civilizations of the Malay Peninsula," in Norman Hammond, ed., *South Asian Archaeology: Papers from the First International Conference of South Asian Archaeologists held in the University of Cambridge* (London, 1973), pp. 279-303.
 52. For a map of find-sites, see Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, p. 276.
 53. Stargardt, "Extent and Limitations," p. 301.
 54. She observes that "while one may agree that the general character of the Kedah monuments places them in the tradition of 'indianized' South East Asia, their Indian affinities are not clearly defined and may reflect an only partial assimilation of both Hindu and Buddhist religious and aesthetic standards." *Ibid.*
 55. Janice Stargardt, "The Srivijaya Civilization in Southern Thailand," *Antiquity*, XLVIII (1973), p. 226.
 56. *Ibid.*
 57. Janice Stargardt, "Southern Thai Waterways: Archaeological Evidence on Agriculture, Shipping and Trade in the Early Srivijayan Period," *Man*, March 1973, pp. 5-29.

58. Stargardt, "Srivijayan Civilization," p. 227.
59. Stargardt, "Southern Thai Waterways," p. 8.
60. See Poerbatjaraka, "Crivijaya, de Cailendra en de Sanjaya-vamca," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 114, 3 (1958), pp. 254-64; Coedes, "L' inscription de la stèle de Ligor : Etat present de son interpretation," *Oriens Extremus*; 6, No. 1 (1959). pp. 42-48.
61. These are the Nālandā and Leiden plates, respectively. Texts and commentary will be found in *Epigraphia Indica*, XVII (1933-34), pp. 281-84.
62. This is not absolutely certain in either case, however. There is a possibility that the ruler of "Suvarṇadvīpa" mentioned in the Nālandā copper plate was really a ruler of Java. And the Sailendras of the Leiden plates are identified as kings of Kaḍāram, i.e., Kedah.
63. The eulogy contains a tantalizing phrase which, at first glance, appears to imply that he did: "Virtuous is the king, the lord of Srivijaya whose sovereignty is recognized and whose commands are obeyed by the neighbouring kings, (and) who has been deliberately created by the Creator of the Universe, as if He had in view the perpetuity of the praiseworthy Law." See K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Sri Vijaya*, pp. 120-21. But the reference to sovereignty may be mere rhetoric.
64. See O. W. Wolters, "Tāmbraḷiṅga," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XXI, Pt. 3 (1958), pp. 587-607.
65. O'Connor, "Tāmbraḷiṅga and the Khmer Empire," p. 167.
66. Coedes, "Siamese Votive Tablets," *Journal of the Siam Society* XX (1927), pp. 1-23; Lamb, "Mahayana Buddhist Votive Tablets in Perlis," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, XXXVII, 2 (1964), pp. 47-59. See also S. J. O'Connor, "Si Chan: an Early Settlement in Peninsular Thailand," *Journal of the Siam Society*, XVI (1968), pp. 1-18, espec. pp. 9-10.
67. Lamb, "Votive Tablets," p. 47.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
69. Lamb suggests that the distribution of tablets may be "related to the boundaries of some political unit associated with the term Srivijaya." *Ibid.*, p. 56. However, the political implications of these tablets are necessarily more

- tenuous than the cultural implications. Whatever else they show, they certainly help us to map the spread of religious influence emanating from India.
70. Nilakanta Sastri, *Sri Vijaya*, p. 79.
 71. On the Pallava role, see especially B. Ch. Chhabra, *Expansion of Indo-Aryan Culture During Pallava Rule*, reprint edition (New Delhi, 1965). It has sometimes been assumed that the evidence of the Leiden Plates implies that Nagapattinam was a center for the dissemination of Buddhism, but this is the least likely implication of the evidence. For that argument, see S. Paranavitana, "Negapatam and Theravada Buddhism in South India," *Journal of the Greater India Society*, XI, No. 1 (1944) pp. 17-25.
 72. John Whitmore has developed an interpretation of Southeast Asian history which stresses precisely this theme of increasing commercial prosperity paralleled by growing outside interest in securing control of it. In his view, the period of formal European colonialism was merely the climax of a long-term trend which had begun many centuries earlier. See "The Opening of Southeast Asia, Trading Patterns Through the Centuries," in Hutterer, ed., *Economic Exchange and Social Interaction in Southeast Asia*, pp. 139-53.
 73. Bronson, "The Archaeology of Sumatra," p. 403.

CHAPTER—7

1. Here I have rather closely followed K. A. Nilakanta Sastri's reading of the passage, rather than attempt a fresh reading, but it should be noted that the descriptive passages accompanying the place-names are merely poetic embellishments and have little empirical, as opposed to literary, value. See among other sources, K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Sri Vijaya* p. 80.
2. Extremely valuable for its locational analysis is Paul Wheatley, *Golden Khersonese*, pp. 199ff.
3. *Epigraphia Carnatica*, X, Ct. 47.
4. *The Cōlas*, p. 240, n. 86.
5. K. G. Krishnan, "Chola Rajendra's Expedition to South-East Asia," in that author's *Studies in South Indian History and Epigraphy* (Madras, 1981), pp. 159-60.

6. In spite of several references in the Tanjore record to ships and bodies of water, there is nothing in those purely rhetorical references that requires us to believe that the Chōlas fought naval battles. Indeed, the equally conventional reference to capturing the Kedah elephants would suggest land battles.
7. Wheatley, "Desultory Remarks," *op. cit.*, p. 59.
8. R. C. Majumdar, "The Overseas Expeditions of King Rajendra Cola," *Artibus Asiae*, XXIV (1961), pp. 338-42.
9. Krishnan, "Chola Rajendra's Expedition," p. 163.
10. Nilakanta Sastri repeatedly mentions this theory, but in *The Cōlas* (p. 220), he sensibly places more emphasis on Rajendra's ambitions.
11. The *Sung Shih* account has been analyzed in a variety of secondary sources, including O. W. Wolters, "North-Western Cambodia in the Seventh Century," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 37 (1974), pp. 355-84. The inscription is no. 164 of 1956-57. It is from the Kārṇasyāmin temple, and records the gift of jewelry set with precious stones.
12. No. 166 of 1956-57, from the same temple. These inscriptions do not say explicitly that the gifts are from the king, but it seems reasonable to infer that they were.
13. *Epigraphia Birmanica*, I, No. viii, p. 165.
14. Kenneth R. Hall, "International Trade and Foreign Diplomacy in Early Medieval South India," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, XIX (1978), pp. 75-98, espec. pp. 94-95.
14. These are described in the *Annual Report on Epigraphy* for 1949-50, pp. 3-5.
16. Majumdar, "Overseas Expeditions."
17. Tan Yeok Seong, "The Srivijayan Inscription of Canton," *op. cit.*
18. Nilakanta Sastri, *Sri Vijaya*, p. 84.
19. Even king Kyaunzitha of Pagan, in the record cited above, claims that he received the beautiful daughter of the Chōli king.
20. See Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya*, espec. chapter 6. The exact dates of the various versions of the *Sejarah Melayu*,

- as well as the earlier materials which they incorporated, is highly problematic, so no precise date for the genealogy will be suggested here.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
 22. This book was published, it must be recalled, prior to the archaeological revelations at Palembang in 1974.
 23. The founder of Malacca was known posthumously to the Malays as Iskandar Shah, and based his ancestral claims primarily on his alleged descent from Alexander. Hence the family of Iskandar/Alexander is viewed in this source as the most illustrious family in history.
 24. No. 266 of 1901 or *SII*, II, No. 84.
 25. *The Cōlas*, p. 316.
 26. For the two records, see *Epigraphia Indica*, XXII (1933-34), pp. 213ff and 267ff.

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ABBREVIATIONS :

- BEFEO — Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient
- BKI — Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië, uitgegeven door het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië
- JCBRAS—Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society
- JMBRAS—Journal of the Malayan (or Malaysian) Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society
- TBG — Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde uitgegeven door het Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen
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Kelmarin kita telah dijajah

Earlier we were colonized

Dan semalam kita merdeka

And yesterday we gain independence

Tapi mengapa masih terpenjara

But why are we still suffering

Dengan sikap tidak apa

From a malaise of apathy

Long Live the Malay Empire of Sriwijaya!

Bersakti Tuanku!